SAINT RONAN'S WELL

SAINT-RONAN'S WELL

SAINT RONAN'S WELL

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

A merry place, 'tis said, in days of yore;
But something ails it now—the place is cursed.
Wordsworth.

WITH FOURTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO AND MELBOURNE
1912

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

	PAGE
List of Illustrations	v
List of Characters	vi
Introduction	vii
Text	1
Notes	461
Glossary	465

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Clara Mowbray and Tyrrel	*Frontispiece*
The Cleikum Inn	1
Mr. Winterblossom exhibiting his Engravings	37
Meiklewham and Mowbray at Shaws Castle	113
Clara Mowbray's Room, Shaws Castle	123
Captain MacTurk and Meg Dods	135
The Duellists	148
The Consultation.—Meg Dods and Mr. Bindloose	157
The Acquaintance.—Mr. Touchwood and the Rev. Mr. Cargill	191
In the Garden at Shaws Castle	245
The Hall at Shaws Castle	283
The Fright.—Tyrrel's Re-appearance at the Cleikum Inn	322
The Visit to Hannah Irwin	385
Death of Clara Mowbray	455

LIST OF CHARACTERS

BINDLOOSE, MR., lawyer and banker of Marchthorn.

BINKS, SIR BINGO, an English baronet.

BULMER, *see* ETHERINGTON.

CARGILL, REV. JOSIAH, Presbyterian minister of Saint Ronan's.

CHATTERLY, REV. SIMON, Chaplain at Saint Ronan's Well.

ETHERINGTON, VALENTINE BULMER, titular EARL OF.

JEKYL, CAPTAIN HENRY, of the — Regiment of Guards; a friend of Lord Etherington.

JOSEPH, an old gardener at Shaws Castle.

MACTURK, CAPTAIN HECTOR, a Highland lieutenant on half-pay.

MEIKLEWHAM, MR., an attorney, agent to John Mowbray.

JOHN MOWBRAY, Laird of Saint Ronan's.

PATRICK, an old domestic at Shaws Castle.

POTT, MR., bookseller at Saint Ronan's Well.

QUACKLEBEN, DR. QUINTON, a physician.

SOLMES, valet to Lord Etherington.

TOUCHWOOD, MR. PEREGRINE (properly Mr. P. T. Scrogie), a traveller.

TYRREL, FRANCIS, half-brother of Lord Etherington.

WINTERBLOSSOM, MR. PHILIP, an elderly man of fashion.

BINKS, LADY (*née* Rachel Bonnyrigg), wife of Sir Bingo Binks

BLOWER, MRS., widow of a sea-captain.

DIGGES, MISS MARIA, aged fourteen.

DINAH, a servant.

DODS, MEG, landlady of the Cleikum Inn, Saint Ronan's.

IRWIN, HANNAH, *alias* Anne Heggie, cousin of Clara Mowbray.

JONES, MISTRESS, servant to Lady Penelope Penfeather.

MARTHA, maid to Clara Mowbray.

MOWBRAY, CLARA, sister to John Mowbray.

PENFEATHER, LADY PENELOPE, a bluestocking.

POTT, MRS., post-mistress at Saint Ronan's Well.

TROTTER, NELLY, a fish-woman.

INTRODUCTION

The novel which follows is upon a plan different from any other that the author has ever written, although it is perhaps the most legitimate which relates to this kind of light literature.

It is intended, in a word—*celebrare domestica facta*—to give an imitation of the shifting manners of our own time, and paint scenes, the originals of which are daily passing round us, so that a minute's observation may compare the copies with the originals. It must be confessed that this style of composition was adopted by the author rather from the tempting circumstance of its offering some novelty in his compositions, and avoiding worn-out characters and positions, than from the hope of rivalling the many formidable competitors who have already won deserved honours in this department. The ladies, in particular, gifted by nature with keen powers of observation and light satire, have been so distinguished by these works of talent, that, reckoning from the authoress of *Evelina* to her of *Marriage*, a catalogue might be made, including the brilliant and talented names of Edgeworth, Austen, Charlotte Smith, and others, whose success seems to have appropriated this province of the novel as exclusively their own. It was therefore with a sense of temerity that the author intruded upon a species of composition which had been of late practised with such distinguished success. This consciousness was lost, however, under the necessity of seeking for novelty, without which, it was much to be apprehended, such repeated incursions on his part would nauseate the long indulgent public at the last.

The scene chosen for the author's little drama of modern life was a mineral spring, such as are to be found in both divisions of Britain, and which are supplied with the usual materials for redeeming health, or driving away care. The invalid often finds relief from his complaints, less from the healing virtues of the spa itself, than because his system of ordinary life undergoes an entire change, in his being removed from his ledger and account-books—from his legal folios and progresses of title-deeds—from his counters and shelves—from whatever else forms the main source of his constant anxiety at home, destroys his appetite, mars the custom of his exercise, deranges the digestive powers, and clogs up the springs of life. Thither, too, comes the saunterer, anxious to get rid of that wearisome attendant, *himself*; and thither come both males and females, who, upon a different principle, desire to make themselves double.

The society of such places is regulated, by their very nature, upon a scheme much more indulgent than that which rules the world of fashion, and the narrow circles of rank in the metropolis. The titles of rank, birth, and fortune are received at a watering-place without any very strict investigation, as adequate to the purpose for which they are preferred; and as the situation infers a certain degree of intimacy and sociability for the time, so to whatever heights it may have been carried, it is not understood to imply any duration beyond the length of the season. No intimacy can be supposed more close for the time, and more transitory in its endurance, than that which is attached to a watering-place acquaintance. The novelist, therefore, who fixes upon such a scene for his tale, endeavours to display a species of society, where the strongest contrast of humorous characters and manners may be brought to bear on and illustrate each other, with less violation of probability than could be supposed to attend the same miscellaneous assemblage in any other situation.

In such scenes, too, are frequently mingled characters, not merely ridiculous, but dangerous and hateful. The unprincipled gamester, the heartless fortune-hunter, all those who eke out their means of subsistence by pandering to the vices and follies of the rich and gay—who drive, by

their various arts, foibles into crimes, and imprudence into acts of ruinous madness, are to be found where their victims naturally resort, with the same certainty that eagles are gathered together at the place of slaughter. By this, the author takes a great advantage for the management of his story, particularly in its darker and more melancholy passages. The impostor, the gambler, all who live loose upon the skirts of society, or, like vermin, thrive by its corruptions, are to be found at such retreats, when they easily, and as a matter of course, mingle with these dupes, who might otherwise have escaped their snares. But besides those characters who are actually dangerous to society, a well-frequented watering-place generally exhibits for the amusement of the company, and the perplexity and amazement of the more inexperienced, a sprinkling of persons called by the newspapers eccentric characters—individuals, namely, who, either from some real derangement of their understanding, or, much more frequently, from an excess of vanity, are ambitious of distinguishing themselves by some striking peculiarity in dress or address, conversation or manners, and perhaps in all. These affectations are usually adopted, like Drawcansir's extravagances, to show *they dare*, and, I must needs say, those who profess them are more frequently to be found among the English than among the natives of either of the other two divisions of the united kingdoms. The reason probably is, that the consciousness of wealth, and a sturdy feeling of independence, which generally pervade the English nation, are, in a few individuals, perverted into absurdity, or at least peculiarity. The witty Irishman, on the contrary, adapts his general behaviour to that of the best society, or that which he thinks such; nor is it any part of the shrewd Scot's national character unnecessarily to draw upon himself public attention. These rules, however, are not without their exceptions; for we find men of every country playing the eccentric at these independent resorts of the gay and the wealthy, where every one enjoys the licence of doing what is good in his own eyes.

It scarce needed these obvious remarks to justify a novelist's choice of a watering-place as the scene of a fictitious narrative. Unquestionably it affords every variety

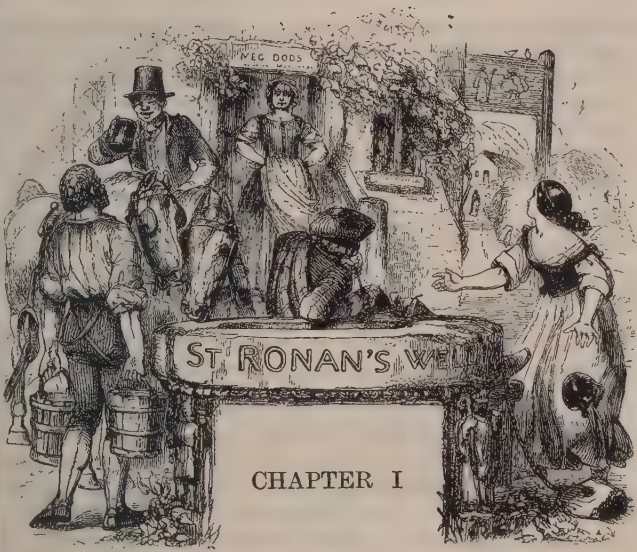
of character, mixed together in a manner which cannot, without a breach of probability, be supposed to exist elsewhere ; neither can it be denied that in the concourse which such miscellaneous collections of persons afford, events extremely different from those of the quiet routine of ordinary life may, and often do, take place.

It is not, however, sufficient that a mine be in itself rich and easily accessible ; it is necessary that the engineer who explores it should himself, in mining phrase, have an accurate knowledge of the *country*, and possess the skill necessary to work it to advantage. In this respect, the author of *Saint Ronan's Well* could not be termed fortunate. His habits of life had not led him much, of late years at least, into its general or bustling scenes, nor had he mingled often in the society which enables the observer to 'shoot folly as it flies'. The consequence perhaps was, that the characters wanted that force and precision which can only be given by a writer who is familiarly acquainted with his subject. The author, however, had the satisfaction to chronicle his testimony against the practice of gambling, a vice which the devil has contrived to render all his own, since it is deprived of whatever pleads an apology for other vices, and is founded entirely on the cold-blooded calculation of the most exclusive selfishness. The character of the traveller, meddling, self-important, and what the ladies call fussing, but yet generous and benevolent in his purposes, was partly taken from nature. The story, being entirely modern, cannot require much explanation, after what has been here given, either in the shape of notes or a more prolix introduction.

It may be remarked that the English critics, in many instances, though none of great influence, pursued *Saint Ronan's Well* with hue and cry, many of the fraternity giving it as their opinion that the author had exhausted himself, or, as the technical phrase expresses it, written himself out ; and as an unusual tract of success too often provokes many persons to mark and exaggerate a slip when it does occur, the author was publicly accused, in prose and verse, of having committed a literary suicide in this unhappy attempt. The voices, therefore, were, for a time, against *Saint Ronan's* on the southern side of the Tweed.

In the author's country it was otherwise. Many of the characters were recognized as genuine Scottish portraits, and the good fortune which had hitherto attended the productions of the Author of Waverley, did not desert, notwithstanding the ominous vaticinations of its censurers, this new attempt, although out of his ordinary style.

ABBOTSFORD,
February 1, 1832.



CHAPTER I

AN OLD-WORLD LANDLADY

But to make up my tale,
She breweth good ale,
And thereof maketh sale.—SKELTON.

ALTHOUGH few, if any, of the countries of Europe have increased so rapidly in wealth and cultivation as Scotland during the last half-century, Sultan Mahmoud's owls might nevertheless have found in Caledonia, at any term within that flourishing period, their dowry of ruined villages. Accident or local advantages have, in many instances, transferred the inhabitants of ancient hamlets from the situations which their predecessors chose, with more respect to security than convenience, to those in which their increasing industry and commerce could more easily expand itself; and hence places which stand distinguished in Scottish history, and which figure in David M'Pherson's excellent historical map, can now only be discerned from the wild moor by the verdure which clothes their site, or,

at best, by a few scattered ruins, resembling pinfolds, which mark the spot of their former existence.

The little village of Saint Ronan's, though it had not yet fallen into the state of entire oblivion we have described, was, about twenty years since, fast verging towards it. The situation had something in it so romantic that it provoked the pencil of every passing tourist; and we will endeavour, therefore, to describe it in language which can scarcely be less intelligible than some of their sketches, avoiding, however, for reasons which seem to us of weight, to give any more exact indication of the site, than that it is on the southern side of the Forth, and not above thirty miles distant from the English frontier.

A river of considerable magnitude pours its streams through a narrow vale, varying in breadth from two miles to a fourth of that distance, and which, being composed of rich alluvial soil, is, and has long been, enclosed, tolerably well inhabited, and cultivated with all the skill of Scottish agriculture. Either side of this valley is bounded by a chain of hills, which, on the right in particular, may be almost termed mountains. Little brooks arising in these ridges, and finding their way to the river, offer each its own little vale to the industry of the cultivator. Some of them bear fine large trees, which have as yet escaped the axe, and upon the sides of most there are scattered patches and fringes of natural copsewood, above and around which the banks of the stream arise, somewhat desolate in the colder months, but in summer glowing with dark purple heath, or with the golden lustre of the broom and gorse. This is a sort of scenery peculiar to those countries, which abound, like Scotland, in hills and in streams, and where the traveller is ever and anon discovering, in some intricate and unexpected recess, a simple and sylvan beauty, which pleases him the more, that it seems to be peculiarly his own property as the first discoverer.

In one of these recesses, and so near its opening as to command the prospect of the river, the broader valley, and the opposite chain of hills, stood, and, unless neglect and desertion have completed their work, still stands, the ancient and decayed village of Saint Ronan's. The site was singularly picturesque, as the straggling street of the

village ran up a very steep hill, on the side of which were clustered, as it were, upon little terraces, the cottages which composed the place, seeming, as in the Swiss towns on the Alps, to rise above each other towards the ruins of an old castle, which continued to occupy the crest of the eminence, and the strength of which had doubtless led the neighbourhood to assemble under its walls for protection. It must, indeed, have been a place of formidable defence, for, on the side opposite to the town, its walls rose straight up from the verge of a tremendous and rocky precipice, whose base was washed by Saint Ronan's Burn, as the brook was entitled. On the southern side, where the declivity was less precipitous, the ground had been carefully levelled into successive terraces, which ascended to the summit of the hill, and were, or rather had been, connected by staircases of stone, rudely ornamented. In peaceful periods these terraces had been occupied by the gardens of the castle, and in times of siege they added to its security, for each commanded the one immediately below it, so that they could be separately and successively defended, and all were exposed to the fire from the place itself—a massive square tower of the largest size, surrounded, as usual, by lower buildings, and a high embattled wall. On the northern side arose a considerable mountain, of which the descent that lay between the eminence on which the castle was situated seemed a detached portion, and which had been improved and deepened by three successive huge trenches. Another very deep trench was drawn in front of the main entrance from the east, where the principal gateway formed the termination of the street, which, as we have noticed, ascended from the village, and this last defence completed the fortifications of the tower.

In the ancient gardens of the castle, and upon all sides of it excepting the western, which was precipitous, large old trees had found root, mantling the rock and the ancient and ruinous walls with their dusky verdure, and increasing the effect of the shattered pile which towered up from the centre.

Seated on the threshold of this ancient pile, where the 'proud porter' had in former days 'reared himself',[1]

[1] See the old ballad of King Estmere, in Percy's *Reliques*.

a stranger had a complete and commanding view of the decayed village, the houses of which, to a fanciful imagination, might seem as if they had been suddenly arrested in hurrying down the precipitous hill, and fixed as if by magic in the whimsical arrangement which they now presented. It was like a sudden pause in one of Amphion's country-dances, when the huts which were to form the future Thebes were jigging it to his lute. But, with such an observer, the melancholy excited by the desolate appearance of the village soon overcame all the lighter frolics of the imagination. Originally constructed on the humble plan used in the building of Scotch cottages about a century ago, the greater part of them had been long deserted ; and their fallen roofs, blackened gables, and ruinous walls, showed desolation's triumph over poverty. On some huts the rafters, varnished with soot, were still standing, in whole or in part, like skeletons, and a few, wholly or partially covered with thatch, seemed still inhabited, though scarce habitable ; for the smoke of the peat-fires, which prepared the humble meal of the indwellers, stole upwards, not only from the chimneys, its regular vent, but from various other crevices in the roofs. Nature, in the meanwhile, always changing, but renewing as she changes, was supplying, by the power of vegetation, the fallen and decaying marks of human labour. Small pollards, which had been formerly planted around the little gardens, had now waxed into huge and high forest trees ; the fruit-trees had extended their branches over the verges of the little yards, and the hedges had shot up into huge and irregular bushes ; while quantities of dock, and nettles, and hemlock, hiding the ruined walls, were busily converting the whole scene of desolation into a picturesque forest bank.

Two houses in Saint Ronan's were still in something like decent repair ; places essential—the one to the spiritual weal of the inhabitants, the other to the accommodation of travellers. These were the clergyman's manse and the village inn. Of the former we need only say that it formed no exception to the general rule by which the landed proprietors of Scotland seem to proceed in lodging their clergy, not only in the cheapest, but in the ugliest and most inconvenient house which the genius of masonry can con-

trive. It had the usual number of chimneys—two, namely —rising like asses' ears at either end, which answered the purpose for which they were designed as ill as usual. It had all the ordinary leaks and inlets to the fury of the elements, which usually form the subject of the complaints of a Scottish incumbent to his brethren of the presbytery; and, to complete the picture, the clergyman being a bachelor, the pigs had unmolested admission to the garden and court-yard, broken windows were repaired with brown paper, and the disordered and squalid appearance of a low farm-house, occupied by a bankrupt tenant, dishonoured the dwelling of one who, besides his clerical character, was a scholar and a gentleman, though little of a humorist.

Beside the manse stood the kirk of Saint Ronan's, a little old mansion with a clay floor, and an assemblage of wretched pews, originally of carved oak, but heedfully clouted with white fir-deal. But the external form of the church was elegant in the outline, having been built in Catholic times, when we cannot deny to the forms of ecclesiastical architecture that grace which, as good Protestants, we refuse to their doctrine. The fabric hardly raised its grey and vaulted roof among the crumbling hills of mortality by which it was surrounded, and was indeed so small in size, and so much lowered in height by the graves on the outside, which ascended half-way up the low Saxon windows, that it might itself have appeared only a funeral vault, or mausoleum of larger size. Its little square tower, with the ancient belfry, alone distinguished it from such a monument. But when the grey-headed beadle turned the keys with his shaking hand, the antiquary was admitted into an ancient building, which, from the style of its architecture, and some monuments of the Mowbrays of Saint Ronan's, which the old man was accustomed to point out, was generally conjectured to be as early as the thirteenth century.

These Mowbrays of Saint Ronan's seem to have been at one time a very powerful family. They were allied to and friends of the house of Douglas, at the time when the overgrown power of that heroic race made the Stuarts tremble on the Scottish throne. It followed that, when, as our old *naïf* historian expresses it, 'no one dared to strive with a Douglas, nor yet with a Douglas's man, for if he did, he

was sure to come by the waur,' the family of Saint Ronan's shared their prosperity, and became lords of almost the whole of the rich valley of which their mansion commanded the prospect. But upon the turning of the tide, in the reign of James II, they became despoiled of the greater part of those fair acquisitions, and succeeding events reduced their importance still further. Nevertheless, they were, in the middle of the seventeenth century, still a family of considerable note; and Sir Reginald Mowbray, after the unhappy battle of Dunbar, distinguished himself by the obstinate defence of the castle against the arms of Cromwell, who, incensed at the opposition which he had unexpectedly encountered in an obscure corner, caused the fortress to be dismantled and blown up with gunpowder.

After this catastrophe the old castle was abandoned to ruin; but Sir Reginald, when, like Allan Ramsay's Sir William Worthy, he returned after the Revolution, built himself a house in the fashion of that later age, which he prudently suited in size to the diminished fortunes of his family. It was situated about the middle of the village, whose vicinity was not in those days judged any inconvenience, upon a spot of ground more level than was presented by the rest of the acclivity, where, as we said before, the houses were notched as it were into the side of the steep bank, with little more level ground about them than the spot occupied by their site. But the laird's house had a court in front and a small garden behind, connected with another garden, which, occupying three terraces, descended, in emulation of the orchards of the old castle, almost to the banks of the stream.

The family continued to inhabit this new messuage until about fifty years before the commencement of our history, when it was much damaged by a casual fire; and the laird of the day, having just succeeded to a more pleasant and commodious dwelling at the distance of about three miles from the village, determined to abandon the habitation of his ancestors. As he cut down at the same time an ancient rookery (perhaps to defray the expenses of the migration), it became a common remark among the country folk, that the decay of Saint Ronan's began when Laird Lawrence and the crows flew off.

The deserted mansion, however, was not consigned to owls and birds of the desert; on the contrary, for many years it witnessed more fun and festivity than when it had been the sombre abode of a grave Scottish baron of 'auld lang syne'. In short, it was converted into an inn, and marked by a huge sign, representing on the one side St. Ronan catching hold of the devil's game-leg with his episcopal crook, as the story may be read in his veracious legend, and on the other the Mowbray arms. It was by far the best frequented public-house in that vicinity; and a thousand stories were told of the revels which had been held within its walls, and the gambols achieved under the influence of its liquors. All this, however, had long since passed away, according to the lines in my frontispiece—

> A merry place, 'twas said, in days of yore;
> But something ail'd it now—the place was cursed.

The worthy couple (servants and favourites of the Mowbray family) who first kept the inn, had died reasonably wealthy, after long carrying on a flourishing trade, leaving behind them an only daughter. They had acquired by degrees not only the property of the inn itself, of which they were originally tenants, but of some remarkably good meadow-land by the side of the brook, which, when touched by a little pecuniary necessity, the lairds of Saint Ronan's had disposed of piecemeal, as the readiest way to portion off a daughter, procure a commission for the younger son, and the like emergencies. So that Meg Dods, when she succeeded to her parents, was a considerable heiress, and, as such, had the honour of refusing three topping farmers, two bonnet-lairds, and a horse-couper, who successively made proposals to her.

Many bets were laid on the horse-couper's success, but the knowing ones were taken in. Determined to ride the fore-horse herself, Meg would admit no helpmate who might soon assert the rights of a master; and so, in single blessedness, and with the despotism of Queen Bess herself, she ruled all matters with a high hand, not only over her men-servants and maid-servants, but over the stranger within her gates, who, if he ventured to oppose Meg's sovereign will and pleasure, or desired to have either fare or accom-

modation different from that which she chose to provide for him, was instantly ejected with that answer which Erasmus tells us silenced all complaints in the German inns of his time, *Quaere aliud hospitium*,[1] or, as Meg expressed it, 'Troop aff wi' ye to another public.' As this amounted to a banishment in extent equal to sixteen miles from Meg's residence, the unhappy party on whom it was passed had no other refuge save by deprecating the wrath of his landlady, and resigning himself to her will. It is but justice to Meg Dods to state that, though hers was a severe and almost despotic government, it could not be termed a tyranny, since it was exercised upon the whole for the good of the subject.

The vaults of the old laird's cellar had not, even in his own day, been replenished with more excellent wines; the only difficulty was to prevail on Meg to look for the precise liquor you chose;—to which it may be added, that she often became restive when she thought a company had had 'as much as did them good,' and refused to furnish any more supplies. Then her kitchen was her pride and glory; she looked to the dressing of every dish herself, and there were some with which she suffered no one to interfere. Such were the cock-a-leeky, and the savoury minced collops, which rivalled in their way even the veal cutlets of our old friend Mrs. Hall, at Ferrybridge. Meg's table-linen, bed-linen, and so forth, were always home-made, of the best quality, and in the best order; and a weary day was that to the chambermaid in which her lynx eye discovered any neglect of the strict cleanliness which she constantly enforced. Indeed, considering Meg's country and calling, we were never able to account for her extreme and scrupulous nicety, unless by supposing that it afforded her the most apt and frequent pretext for scolding her maids; an exercise in which she displayed so much eloquence and energy, that we must needs believe it to have been a favourite one.[2]

[1] In a colloquy of Erasmus, called *Diversaria*, there is a very unsavoury description of a German inn of the period, where an objection of the guest is answered in the manner expressed in the text—a great sign of want of competition on the road.

[2] This circumstance shows of itself, that the Meg Dods of the tale

We have only further to commemorate the moderation of Meg's reckonings, which, when they closed the banquet, often relieved the apprehensions, instead of saddening the heart, of the rising guest. A shilling for breakfast, three shillings for dinner, including a pint of old port, eighteenpence for a snug supper—such were the charges of the inn at Saint Ronan's, under this landlady of the olden world, even after the nineteenth century had commenced; and they were ever tendered with the pious recollection, that her good father never charged half so much, but these weary times rendered it impossible for her to make the lawing less.[1]

Notwithstanding all these excellent and rare properties, the inn at Saint Ronan's shared the decay of the village to which it belonged. This was owing to various circumstances. The high road had been turned aside from the place, the steepness of the street being murder (so the postilions declared) to their post-horses. It was thought that Meg's stern refusal to treat them with liquor, or to connive at their exchanging for porter and whisky the corn which should feed their cattle, had no small influence on the opinion of those respectable gentlemen, and that a little cutting and levelling would have made the ascent easy enough; but let that pass. This alteration of the highway was an injury which Meg did not easily forgive to the country gentlemen, most of whom she had recollected when children. 'Their fathers,' she said, 'wad not have done the like of it to a lone woman.' Then the decay of the village itself, which had formerly contained a set of feuars and bonnet-lairds, who, under the name of the Chirupping Club, contrived to drink twopenny, qualified with brandy or whisky, at least twice or thrice a week, was some small loss.

The temper and manners of the landlady scared away all customers of that numerous class who will not allow originality to be an excuse for the breach of decorum, and who, little accustomed perhaps to attendance at home, love to play the great man at an inn, and to have a certain number of bows, deferential speeches, and apologies, in

[1] cannot be identified with her namesake Jenny Dods, who kept the inn at Howgate, on the Peebles road; for Jenny, far different from our heroine, was unmatched as a slattern.

answer to the 'G— d—n ye's' which they bestow on the house, attendance, and entertainment. Unto those who commenced this sort of barter in the clachan of Saint Ronan's, well could Meg Dods pay it back, in their own coin; and glad they were to escape from the house with eyes not quite scratched out, and ears not more deafened than if they had been within hearing of a pitched battle.

Nature had formed honest Meg for such encounters; and as her noble soul delighted in them, so her outward properties were in what Tony Lumpkin calls a concatenation accordingly. She had hair of a brindled colour, betwixt black and grey, which was apt to escape in elf-locks from under her mutch when she was thrown into violent agitation—long skinny hands, terminated by stout talons—grey eyes, thin lips, a robust person, a broad, though flat chest, capital wind, and a voice that could match a choir of fish-women. She was accustomed to say of herself, in her more gentle moods, that her bark was worse than her bite; but what teeth could have matched a tongue which, when in full career, is vouched to have been heard from the kirk to the castle of Saint Ronan's?

These notable gifts, however, had no charms for the travellers of these light and giddy-paced times, and Meg's inn became less and less frequented. What carried the evil to the uttermost was, that a fanciful lady of rank in the neighbourhood chanced to recover of some imaginary complaint by the use of a mineral well about a mile and a half from the village; a fashionable doctor was found to write an analysis of the healing waters, with a list of sundry cures; a speculative builder took land in feu, and erected lodging-houses, shops, and even streets. At length a tontine subscription was obtained to erect an inn, which, for the more grace, was called an hotel; and so the desertion of Meg Dods became general.[n]

She had still, however, her friends and well-wishers, many of whom thought that, as she was a lone woman, and known to be well to pass in the world, she would act wisely to retire from public life, and take down a sign which had no longer fascination for guests. But Meg's spirit scorned submission direct or implied. 'Her father's door,' she said,

'should be open to the road, till her father's bairn should be streekit and carried out at it with her feet foremost. It was not for the profit—there was little profit at it;—profit? —there was a dead loss;—but she wad not be dung by any of them. They maun hae a hottle,[1] maun they?—and an honest public canna serve them! They may hottle that likes; but they shall see that Luckie Dods can hottle on as lang as the best of them—aye, though they had made a Tamteen of it, and linkit a' their breaths of lives, whilk are in their nostrils, on end of ilk other like a string of wild-geese, and the langest liver bruick a' (whilk was sinful presumption), she would match ilk ane of them as lang as her ain wind held out.' Fortunate it was for Meg, since she had formed this doughty resolution, that although her inn had decayed in custom, her land had risen in value in a degree which more than compensated the balance on the wrong side of her books, and, joined to her usual providence and economy, enabled her to act up to her lofty purpose.

She prosecuted her trade too with every attention to its diminished income; shut up the windows of one half of her house, to baffle the tax-gatherer; retrenched her furniture; discharged her pair of post-horses, and pensioned off the old humpbacked postilion who drove them, retaining his services, however, as an assistant to a still more aged ostler. To console herself for restrictions by which her pride was secretly wounded, she agreed with the celebrated Dick Tinto to repaint her father's sign, which had become rather undecipherable; and Dick accordingly gilded the bishop's crook, and augmented the horrors of the devil's aspect, until it became a terror to all the younger fry of the schoolhouse, and a sort of visible illustration of the terrors of the arch-enemy, with which the minister endeavoured to impress their infant minds.

Under this renewed symbol of her profession, Meg Dods, or Meg Dorts, as she was popularly termed, on account of her refractory humours, was still patronized by some steady customers. Such were the members of the Kilnakelty

[1] This Gallic word (hôtel) was first introduced in Scotland during the author's childhood, and was so pronounced by the lower class.

Hunt, once famous on the turf and in the field, but now a set of venerable grey-headed sportsmen, who had sunk from foxhounds to basket-beagles and coursing, and who made an easy canter on their quiet nags a gentle induction to a dinner at Meg's. 'A set of honest decent men they were,' Meg said; 'had their sang and their joke—and what for no? Their bind was just a Scots pint overhead, and a tappit-hen to the bill, and no man ever saw them the waur o't. It was thae cockle-brained callants of the present day that would be mair owerta'en with a puir quart than douce folks were with a magnum.'

Then there was a set of ancient brethren of the angle from Edinburgh, who visited Saint Ronan's frequently in the spring and summer, a class of guests peculiarly acceptable to Meg, who permitted them more latitude in her premises than she was known to allow to any other body. 'They were,' she said, 'pawky auld carles, that kend whilk side their bread was buttered upon. Ye never kend of ony o' them ganging to the spring, as they behoved to ca' the stinking well yonder. Na, na—they were up in the morning—had their parritch, wi' maybe a thimbleful of brandy, and then awa' up into the hills, eat their bit cauld meat on the heather, and came hame at e'en wi' the creel full of caller trouts, and had them to their dinner, and their quiet cogue of ale, and their drap punch, and were set singing their catches and glees, as they ca'd them, till ten o'clock, and then to bed, wi' God bless ye—and what for no?'

Thirdly, we may commemorate some ranting blades, who also came from the metropolis to visit Saint Ronan's, attracted by the humours of Meg, and still more by the excellence of her liquor, and the cheapness of her reckonings. These were members of the Helter Skelter Club, of the Wildfire Club, and other associations formed for the express purpose of getting rid of care and sobriety. Such dashers occasioned many a racket in Meg's house, and many a *bourrasque* in Meg's temper. Various were the arts of flattery and violence by which they endeavoured to get supplies of liquor, when Meg's conscience told her they had had too much already. Sometimes they failed, as when the croupier of the Helter Skelter got himself scalded with the mulled wine, in an unsuccessful attempt to coax this

formidable virago by a salute ; and the excellent president of the Wildfire received a broken head from the keys of the cellar, as he endeavoured to possess himself of these emblems of authority. But little did these dauntless officials care for the exuberant frolics of Meg's temper, which were to them only 'pretty Fanny's way'—the *dulces Amaryllidis irae*. And Meg, on her part, though she often called them 'drunken ne'er-do-weels, and thoroughbred High Street blackguards,' allowed no other person to speak ill of them in her hearing. 'They were daft callants,' she said, 'and that was all—when the drink was in, the wit was out—ye could not put an auld head upon young shouthers—a young cowt will canter, be it up hill or down—and what for no ?' was her uniform conclusion.

Nor must we omit, among Meg's steady customers, 'faithful amongst the unfaithful found,' the copper-nosed sheriff-clerk of the county, who, when summoned by official duty to that district of the shire, warmed by recollections of her double-brewed ale, and her generous Antigua, always advertised that his 'Prieves', or 'Comptis', or whatever other business was in hand, were to proceed on such a day and hour, 'within the house of Margaret Dods, vintner in Saint Ronan's.'

We have only further to notice Meg's mode of conducting herself towards chance travellers, who, knowing nothing of nearer or more fashionable accommodations, or perhaps consulting rather the state of their purse than of their taste, stumbled upon her house of entertainment. Her reception of these was as precarious as the hospitality of a savage nation to sailors shipwrecked on their coast. If the guests seemed to have made her mansion their free choice—or if she liked their appearance (and her taste was very capricious)—above all, if they seemed pleased with what they got, and little disposed to criticize or give trouble, it was all very well. But if they had come to Saint Ronan's because the house at the Well was full—or if she disliked what the sailor calls the cut of their jib—or if, above all, they were critical about their accommodations, none so likely as Meg to give them what in her country is called a *sloan*. In fact, she reckoned such persons a part of that ungenerous and ungrateful public for whose sake she was keeping her house

open at a dead loss, and who had left her, as it were, a victim to her patriotic zeal.

Hence arose the different reports concerning the little inn of Saint Ronan's, which some favoured travellers praised as the neatest and most comfortable old-fashioned house in Scotland, where you had good attendance, and good cheer, at moderate rates ; while others, less fortunate, could only talk of the darkness of the rooms, the homeliness of the old furniture, and the detestable bad humour of Meg Dods, the landlady.

Reader, if you come from the more sunny side of the Tweed—or even if, being a Scot, you have had the advantage to be born within the last twenty-five years, you may be induced to think this portrait of Queen Elizabeth, in Dame Quickly's piqued hat and green apron, somewhat overcharged in the features. But I appeal to my own contemporaries, who have known wheel-road, bridle-way, and footpath for thirty years, whether they do not, every one of them, remember Meg Dods—or somebody very like her. Indeed, so much is this the case, that, about the period I mention, I should have been afraid to have rambled from the Scottish metropolis, in almost any direction, lest I had lighted upon some one of the sisterhood of Dame Quickly, who might suspect me of having showed her up to the public in the character of Meg Dods. At present, though it is possible that some one or two of this peculiar class of wild-cats may still exist, their talons must be much impaired by age ; and I think they can do little more than sit, like the Giant Pope in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, at the door of their unfrequented caverns, and grin at the pilgrims over whom they used formerly to execute their despotism.

CHAPTER II

THE GUEST

Quis novus hic hospes ?
DIDO APUD VIRGILIUM.

Ch'am-maid ! The Gemman in the front parlour !
BOOTS'S FREE TRANSLATION OF THE AENEID.

IT was on a fine summer's day that a solitary traveller rode under the old-fashioned archway, and alighted in the courtyard of Meg Dods's inn, and delivered the bridle of his horse to the humpbacked postilion. 'Bring my saddle-bags,' he said, 'into the house—or stay—I am abler, I think, to carry them than you.' He then assisted the poor meagre groom to unbuckle the straps which secured the humble and now despised convenience, and meantime gave strict charges that his horse should be unbridled, and put into a clean and comfortable stall, the girths slacked, and a cloth cast over his loins ; but that the saddle should not be removed until he himself came to see him dressed.

The companion of his travels seemed in the ostler's eye deserving of his care, being a strong active horse, fit either for the road or field, but rather high in bone from a long journey, though from the state of his skin it appeared the utmost care had been bestowed to keep him in condition. While the groom obeyed the stranger's directions, the latter, with the saddle-bags laid over his arm, entered the kitchen of the inn.

Here he found the landlady herself in none of her most blessed humours. The cook-maid was abroad on some errand, and Meg, in a close review of the kitchen apparatus, was making the unpleasant discovery that trenchers had been broken or cracked, pots and saucepans not so accurately scoured as her precise notions of cleanliness required, which, joined to other detections of a more petty description, stirred her bile in no small degree ; so that while she disarranged and arranged the *bink*, she maundered, in an undertone, complaints and menaces against the absent delinquent.

The entrance of a guest did not induce her to suspend this agreeable amusement—she just glanced at him as he entered, then turned her back short on him, and continued her labour and her soliloquy of lamentation. Truth is, she thought she recognized in the person of the stranger one of those useful envoys of the commercial community, called, by themselves and the waiters, *Travellers*, *par excellence*—by others, Riders and Bagmen. Now against this class of customers Meg had peculiar prejudices; because, there being no shops in the old village of Saint Ronan's, the said commercial emissaries, for the convenience of their traffic, always took up their abode at the New Inn, or Hotel, in the rising and rival village called Saint Ronan's Well, unless when some straggler, by chance or dire necessity, was compelled to lodge himself at the Auld Town, as the place of Meg's residence began to be generally termed. She had, therefore, no sooner formed the hasty conclusion that the individual in question belonged to this obnoxious class, than she resumed her former occupation, and continued to soliloquize and apostrophize her absent handmaidens, without even appearing sensible of his presence.

'The huzzy Beenie—the jaud Eppie—the deil's buckie of a callant!—Another plate gane—they'll break me out of house and ha'!'

The traveller, who, with his saddle-bags rested on the back of a chair, had waited in silence for some note of welcome, now saw that ghost or no ghost he must speak first, if he intended to have any notice from his landlady.

'You are my old acquaintance, Mistress Margaret Dods?' said the stranger.

'What for no?—and wha are ye that speers?' said Meg, in the same breath, and began to rub a brass candlestick with more vehemence than before—the dry tone in which she spoke indicating plainly how little concern she took in the conversation.

'A traveller, good Mistress Dods, who comes to take up his lodgings here for a day or two.'

'I am thinking ye will be mista'en,' said Meg; 'there 's nae room for bags or jaugs here—ye've mista'en your road,

neighbour—ye maun e'en bundle yoursell a bit farther down hill.'

'I see you have not got the letter I sent you, Mistress Dods?' said the guest.

'How should I, man?' answered the hostess; 'they have ta'en awa the post office from us—moved it down till the spa-well yonder, as they ca'd.'

'Why, that is but a step off,' observed the guest.

'Ye will get there the sooner,' answered the hostess.

'Nay, but,' said the guest, 'if you had sent there for my letter, you would have learned'——

'I'm no wanting to learn onything at my years,' said Meg. 'If folk have onything to write to me about, they may gie the letter to John Hislop, the carrier, that has used the road these forty years. As for the letters at the post-mistress's, as they ca' her, down by yonder, they may bide in her shop-window, wi' the snaps and bawbee rows till Beltane, or I loose them. I'll never file my fingers with them. Post-mistress, indeed!—Upsetting cutty! I mind her fou weel when she dree'd penance for antenup'——

Laughing, but interrupting Meg in good time for the character of the post-mistress, the stranger assured her he had sent his fishing-rod and trunk to her confidential friend the carrier, and that he sincerely hoped she would not turn an old acquaintance out of her premises, especially as he believed he could not sleep in a bed within five miles of Saint Ronan's, if he knew that her Blue room was unengaged.

'Fishing-rod!—Auld acquaintance!—Blue room!' echoed Meg, in some surprise; and, facing round upon the stranger, and examining him with some interest and curiosity,—'Ye'll be nae bag-man, then, after a'?'

'No,' said the traveller; 'not since I have laid the saddle-bags out of my hand.'

'Weel, I canna say but I am glad of that—I canna bide their yanking way of knapping English at every word.—I have kent decent lads amang them too—What for no?—But that was when they stopped up here whiles, like other douce folk; but since they gaed down, the hail flight of them, like a string of wild-geese, to the new-fashioned hottle yonder, I am told there are as mony hellicate tricks

played in the travellers' room, as they behove to call it, as if it were fou of drunken young lairds.'

'That is because they have not you to keep good order among them, Mistress Margaret.'

'Aye, lad?' replied Meg, 'ye are a fine blaw-in-my-lug, to think to cuittle me off sae cleverly!' And, facing about upon her guest, she honoured him with a more close and curious investigation than she had at first designed to bestow upon him.

All that she remarked was in her opinion rather favourable to the stranger. He was a well-made man, rather above than under the middle size, and apparently betwixt five-and-twenty and thirty years of age—for, although he might, at first glance, have passed for one who had attained the latter period, yet, on a nearer examination, it seemed as if the burning sun of a warmer climate than Scotland, and perhaps some fatigue, both of body and mind, had imprinted the marks of care and of manhood upon his countenance, without abiding the course of years. His eyes and teeth were excellent, and his other features, though they could scarce be termed handsome, expressed sense and acuteness; he bore, in his aspect, that ease and composure of manner, equally void of awkwardness and affectation, which is said emphatically to mark the gentleman; and, although neither the plainness of his dress, nor the total want of the usual attendants, allowed Meg to suppose him a wealthy man, she had little doubt that he was above the rank of her lodgers in general. Amidst these observations, and while she was in the course of making them, the good landlady was embarrassed with various obscure recollections of having seen the object of them formerly; but when, or on what occasion, she was quite unable to call to remembrance. She was particularly puzzled by the cold and sarcastic expression of a countenance, which she could not by any means reconcile with the recollections which it awakened. At length she said with as much courtesy as she was capable of assuming,—'Either I have seen you before, sir, or some ane very like ye? Ye ken the Blue room, too, and you a stranger in these parts?'

'Not so much a stranger as you may suppose, Meg,' said

the guest, assuming a more intimate tone, 'when I call myself Frank Tyrrel.'

'Tirl!' exclaimed Meg, with a tone of wonder—'It 's impossible! You cannot be Francie Tirl, the wild callant that was fishing and bird-nesting here seven or eight years syne—it canna be—Francie was but a callant!'

'But add seven or eight years to that boy's life, Meg,' said the stranger gravely, 'and you will find you have the man who is now before you.'

'Even sae!' said Meg, with a glance at the reflection of her own countenance in the copper coffee-pot, which she had scoured so brightly that it did the office of a mirror—'Just e'en sae—but folk maun grow auld or die. But, Mr. Tirl, for I maunna ca' ye Francie now, I am thinking'——

'Call me what you please, good dame,' said the stranger; 'it has been so long since I heard any one call me by a name that sounded like former kindness, that such a one is more agreeable to me than a lord's title would be.'

'Weel, then, Maister Francie—if it be no offence to you—I hope ye are no a nabob?'

'Not I, I can safely assure you, my old friend;—but what an I were?'

'Naething—only maybe I might bid ye gang farther, and be waur served. Nabobs, indeed! the country's plagued wi' them. They have raised the price of eggs and pootry for twenty miles round—But what is my business?—They use almaist a' of them the Well down by—they need it, ye ken for the clearing of their copper complexions, that need scouring as much as my saucepans, that naebody can clean but mysell.'

'Well, my good friend,' said Tyrrel, 'the upshot of all this is, I hope, that I am to stay and have dinner here?'

'What for no?' replied Mrs. Dods.

'And that I am to have the Blue room for a night or two—perhaps longer?'

'I dinna ken that,' said the dame. 'The Blue room is the best—and they that get neist best are no ill aff in this warld.'

'Arrange it as you will,' said the stranger, 'I leave the whole matter to you, mistress. Meantime, I will go see after my horse.'

'The merciful man,' said Meg, when her guest had left the kitchen, 'is merciful to his beast. He had ay something about him by ordinar, that callant—But eh, sirs! there is a sair change on his cheek-haffit since I saw him last!—He sall no want a good dinner for auld lang syne, that I 'se engage for.'

Meg set about the necessary preparations with all the natural energy of her disposition, which was so much exerted upon her culinary cares, that her two maids, on their return to the house, escaped the bitter reprimand which she had been previously conning over, in reward for their alleged slatternly negligence. Nay, so far did she carry her complaisance, that when Tyrrel crossed the kitchen to recover his saddle-bags, she formally rebuked Eppie for an idle taupie, for not carrying the gentleman's things to his room.

'I thank you, mistress,' said Tyrrel; 'but I have some drawings and colours in these saddle-bags, and I always like to carry them myself.'

'Aye, and are you at the painting trade yet?' said Meg; 'an unco slaister ye used to make with it lang syne.'

'I cannot live without it,' said Tyrrel; and, taking the saddle-bags, was formally inducted by the maid into a snug apartment, where he soon had the satisfaction to behold a capital dish of minced collops, with vegetables, and a jug of excellent ale, placed on the table by the careful hand of Meg herself. He could do no less, in acknowledgement of the honour, than ask Meg for a bottle of the yellow seal, 'if there was any of that excellent claret still left.'

'Left?—aye is there, walth of it,' said Meg; 'I dinna gie it to everybody—Ah! Maister Tirl, ye have not got owre your auld tricks!—I am sure, if ye are painting for your leeving, as you say, a little rum and water would come cheaper, and do ye as much good. But ye maun hae your ain way the day, nae doubt, if ye should never have it again.'

Away trudged Meg, her keys clattering as she went, and, after much rummaging, returned with such a bottle of claret as no fashionable tavern could have produced, were it called for by a duke, or at a duke's price; and she seemed not a little gratified when her guest assured her

that he had not yet forgotten its excellent flavour. She retired after these acts of hospitality, and left the stranger to enjoy in quiet the excellent matters which she had placed before him.

But there was that on Tyrrel's mind which defied the enlivening power of good cheer and of wine, which only maketh man's heart glad when that heart has no secret oppression to counteract its influence. Tyrrel found himself on a spot which he had loved in that delightful season when youth and high spirits awaken all those flattering promises which are so ill kept to manhood. He drew his chair into the embrasure of the old-fashioned window, and throwing up the sash to enjoy the fresh air, suffered his thoughts to return to former days, while his eyes wandered over objects which they had not looked upon for several eventful years. He could behold beneath his eye the lower part of the decayed village, as its ruins peeped from the umbrageous shelter with which they were shrouded. Still lower down, upon the little holm which forms its churchyard, was seen the kirk of Saint Ronan's; and looking yet farther, towards the junction of Saint Ronan's Burn with the river which traversed the larger dale or valley, he could see, whitened by the western sun, the rising houses, which were either newly finished or in the act of being built, about the medicinal spring.

'Time changes all around us,' such was the course of natural though trite reflection, which flowed upon Tyrrel's mind; 'wherefore should loves and friendships have a longer date than our dwellings and our monuments?' As he indulged these sombre recollections, his officious landlady disturbed their tenor by her entrance.

'I was thinking to offer you a dish of tea, Maister Francie, just for the sake of auld lang syne, and I'll gar the quean Beenie bring it here, and mask it mysell.—But ye arena done with your wine yet?'

'I am indeed, Mrs. Dods,' answered Tyrrel; 'and I beg you will remove the bottle.'

'Remove the bottle, and the wine no half drank out!' said Meg, displeasure lowering on her brow; 'I hope there is nae fault to be found wi' the wine, Maister Tirl?'

To this answer, which was put in a tone resembling

defiance, Tyrrel submissively replied, by declaring 'the claret not only unexceptionable, but excellent.'

'And what for dinna ye drink it, then?' said Meg sharply; 'folk should never ask for mair liquor than they can mak a gude use of. Maybe ye think we have the fashion of the table-dot, as they ca' their new-fangled ordinary down-by yonder, where a' the bits of vinegar cruets are put awa into an awmry, as they tell me, and ilk ane wi' the bit dribbles of syndings in it, and a paper about the neck o't, to show which of the customers is aught it—there they stand like doctor's drogs—and no an honest Scottish mutchkin will ane o' their viols haud, granting it were at the fouest.'

'Perhaps,' said Tyrrel, willing to indulge the spleen and prejudice of his old acquaintance, 'perhaps the wine is not so good as to make full measure desirable.'

'Ye may say that, lad—and yet them that sell it might afford a gude penniworth, for they hae it for the making—maist feck of it ne'er saw France or Portugal. But as I was saying—this is no ane of their new-fangled places, where wine is put by for them that canna drink it—when the cork's drawn the bottle maun be drank out—and what for no?—unless it be corkit.'

'I agree entirely, Meg,' said her guest; 'but my ride to-day has somewhat heated me—and I think the dish of tea you promise me will do me more good than to finish my bottle.'

'Na, then, the best I can do for you is to put it by, to be sauce for the wild duck the morn; for I think ye said ye were to bide here for a day or twa.'

'It is my very purpose, Meg, unquestionably,' replied Tyrrel.

'Sae be it then,' said Mrs. Dods; 'and then the liquor's no lost—it has been seldom sic claret as that has simmered in a saucepan, let me tell you that, neighbour;—and I mind the day, when headache or nae headache, ye wad hae been at the hinder-end of that bottle, and maybe anither, if ye could have gotten it wiled out of me. But then ye had your cousin to help you—Ah! he was a blithe bairn, that Valentine Bulmer! Ye were a canty callant too, Maister Francie, and muckle ado I had to keep ye baith in order

when ye were on the ramble. But ye were a thought doucer than Valentine—But O, he was a bonny laddie !—wi' e'en like diamonds, cheeks like roses, a head like a heather-tap—he was the first I ever saw wear a crap, as they ca' it, but a' body cheats the barber now—and he had a laugh that wad hae raised the dead ! What wi' flyting on him, and what wi' laughing at him, there was nae minding ony other body when that Valentine was in the house. And how is your cousin, Valentine Bulmer, Maister Francie ? '

Tyrrel looked down, and only answered with a sigh.

' Aye—and is it even sae ? ' said Meg ; ' and has the puir bairn been sae soon removed frae this fashious warld ? Aye—aye—we maun a' gang ae gate—crackit quart-stoups and geisen'd barrels—leaky quaighs are we a', and canna keep in the liquor of life—Ohon, sirs ! Was the puir lad Bulmer frae Bu'mer Bay, where they land the Hollands, think ye, Maister Francie ? They whiles rin in a pickle tea there too—I hope that is good that I have made you, Maister Francie ? '

' Excellent, my good dame,' said Tyrrel ; but it was in a tone of voice which intimated that she had pressed upon a subject which awakened some unpleasant reflections.

' And when did this puir lad die ? ' continued Meg, who was not without her share of Eve's qualities, and wished to know something concerning what seemed to affect her guest so particularly ; but he disappointed her purpose, and at the same time awakened another train of sentiment in her mind, by turning again to the window, and looking upon the distant buildings of Saint Ronan's Well. As if he had observed for the first time these new objects, he said to Mistress Dods in an indifferent tone, ' You have got some gay new neighbours yonder, mistress.'

' Neighbours,' said Meg, her wrath beginning to arise, as it always did upon any allusion to this sore subject—' Ye may ca' them neighbours, if ye like—but the deil flee awa wi' the neighbourhood for Meg Dods ! '

' I suppose,' said Tyrrel, as if he did not observe her displeasure, ' that yonder is the Fox Hotel they told me of ? '

' The Fox ! ' said Meg ; ' I am sure it is the fox that

has carried off a' my geese. I might shut up house, Maister Francie, if it was the thing I lived by—me that has seen a' our gentlefolks' bairns, and gien them snaps and sugar-biscuit maist of them wi' my ain hand! They wad hae seen my father's roof-tree fa' down and smoor me before they wad hae gien a boddle a-piece to have propped it up—but they could a' link out their fifty pounds ower head to bigg a hottle at the Well yonder. And muckle they hae made o't—the bankrupt body, Sandie Lawson, hasna paid them a bawbee of four terms' rent.'

'Surely, mistress, I think if the Well became so famous for its cures, the least the gentlemen could have done was to make you the priestess.'

'Me priestess! I am nae Quaker, I wot, Maister Francie; and I never heard of alewife that turned preacher, except Luckie Buchan in the West.[1] And if I were to preach, I think I have mair the spirit of a Scottishwoman, than to preach in the very room they hae been dancing in ilka night in the week, Saturday itsell not excepted, and that till twal o'clock at night. Na, na, Maister Francie; I leave the like o' that to Mr. Simon Chatterly, as they ca' the bit prelatical sprig of divinity from the town yonder, that plays at cards and dances six days in the week, and on the seventh reads the Common Prayer-book in the ball-room, with Tam Simson, the drunken barber, for his clerk.'

'I think I have heard of Mr. Chatterly,' said Tyrrel.

'Ye'll be thinking o' the sermon he has printed,' said the angry dame, 'where he compares their nasty puddle of a well yonder to the pool of Bethesda, like a foul-mouthed, fleeching, feather-headed fule as he is! He should hae kend that the place got a' its fame in the times of Black Popery; and though they pat it in St. Ronan's name, I'll never believe for one that the honest man had ony hand in it; for I hae been tell'd by ane that suld ken, that he was nae Roman, but only a Cuddie, or Culdee, or such like. But will ye not take anither dish of tea, Maister Francie? and a wee bit of the diet-loaf, raised wi' my ain fresh butter, Maister Francie? and no wi' greasy kitchen-fee, like the

[1] The foundress of a sect called Buchanites; a species of Joanna Southcote, who long after death was expected to return and head her disciples on the road to Jerusalem.

seedcake down at the confectioner's yonder, that has as mony dead flees as carvey in it. Set him up for confectioner! Wi' a pennyworth of rye-meal, and anither of tryacle, and twa or three carvey-seeds, I will make better confections than ever cam out of his oven.'

'I have no doubt of that, Mrs. Dods,' said the guest; 'and I only wish to know how these new comers were able to establish themselves against a house of such good reputation and old standing as yours? It was the virtues of the mineral, I daresay; but how came the waters to recover a character all at once, mistress?'

'I dinna ken, sir—they used to be thought good for naething, but here and there for a puir body's bairn, that had gotten the cruells,[1] and could not afford a pennyworth of salts. But my Leddy Penelope Penfeather had fa'an ill, it 's like, as nae other body had ever fell ill, and sae she was to be cured some gate naebody was ever cured, which was naething mair than was reasonable—and my leddy, ye ken, has wit at wull, and has a' the wise folk out from Edinburgh at her house at Windywa's yonder, which it is her leddyship's will and pleasure to call Air Castle—and they have a' their different turns, and some can clink verses, wi' their tale, as weel as Rob Burns or Allan Ramsay—and some rin up hill and down dale, knapping the chucky stanes to pieces wi' hammers, like sae mony road-makers run daft—they say it is to see how the warld was made!—and some that play on all manner of ten-stringed instruments—and a wheen sketching souls, that ye may see perched like craws on every craig in the country, e'en working at your ain trade, Maister Francie; forby men that had been in foreign parts, or said they had been there, whilk is a' ane, ye ken, and maybe twa or three draggle-tailed misses, that wear my Leddy Penelope's follies when she has dune wi' them, as her queans of maids wear her second-hand claithes. So, after her leddyship's happy recovery, as they ca'd it, down cam the hail tribe of wild geese, and settled by the Well, to dine thereout on the bare grund, like a wheen tinklers; and they had sangs, and tunes, and healths, nae doubt, in praise of the fountain, as they ca'd the Well, and of Leddy Penelope Penfeather; and, lastly, they behoved

[1] *Escrouelles*, King's evil.

a' to take a solemn bumper of the spring, which, as I am tauld, made unco havoc among them or they wan hame ; and this they ca'd picknick, and a plague to them ! And sae the jig was begun after her leddyship's pipe, and mony a mad measure has been danced sin' syne ; for down cam masons and murgeon-makers, and preachers and player-folk, and Episcopalians and Methodists, and fools and fiddlers, and Papists and piebakers, and doctors and drugsters ; by the shop-folk, that sell trash and trumpery at three prices—and so up got the bonny new Well, and down fell the honest auld town of Saint Ronan's, where blithe decent folk had been heartsome eneugh for mony a day before ony o' them were born, or ony sic vapouring fancies kittled in their cracked brains.'

'What said your landlord, the laird of Saint Ronan's, to all this ?' said Tyrrel.

'Is't *my* landlord ye are asking after, Maister Francie ?—the laird of Saint Ronan's is nae landlord of mine, and I think ye might hae minded that. Na, na, thanks be to Praise ! Meg Dods is baith land*lord* and land*leddy*. Ill eneugh to keep the doors open as it is, let be facing Whit-sunday and Martinmas—an auld leather pock there is, Maister Francie, in ane of worthy Maister Bindloose the sheriff-clerk's pigeon-holes, in his dowcot of a closet in the burgh ; and therein is baith charter, and sasine, and special service to boot ; and that will be chapter and verse, speer when ye list.'

'I had quite forgotten,' said Tyrrel, 'that the inn was your own ; though I remember you were a considerable landed proprietor.'

'Maybe I am,' replied Meg, 'maybe I am not ; and if I be, what for no ? But as to what the laird, whose grand-father was my father's landlord, said to the new doings yonder—he just jumped at the ready penny, like a cock at a grossart, and feu'd the bonny holm beside the Well, that they ca'd Saints-Well-holm, that was like the best land in his aught, to be carved, and biggit, and howkit up, just at the pleasure of Jock Ashler the stane-mason, that ca's himsell an arkiteck—there 's nae living for new words in this new warld neither, and that is another vex to auld folk such as me—It 's a shame o' the young laird to let his

auld patrimony gang the gate it 's like to gang, and my heart is sair to see 't, though it has but little cause to care what comes of him or his.'

'Is it the same Mr. Mowbray,' said Mr. Tyrrel, 'who still holds the estate ?—the old gentleman, you know, whom I had some dispute with '——

'About hunting moor-fowl upon the Spring-well-head muirs ?' said Meg. 'Ah, lad ! honest Maister Bindloose brought you neatly off there—Na, it 's no that honest man, but his son John Mowbray—the t'other has slept down-by in Saint Ronan's Kirk for these six or seven years.'

'Did he leave,' asked Tyrrel, with something of a faltering voice, 'no other child than the present laird ?'

'No other son,' said Meg; 'and there 's e'en eneugh, unless he could have left a better ane.'

'He died, then,' said Tyrrel, 'excepting this son, without children ?'

'By your leave, no,' said Meg; 'there is the lassie, Miss Clara, that keeps house for the laird, if it can be ca'd keeping house, for he is almost ay down at the Well yonder —so a sma' kitchen serves them at the Shaws.'

'Miss Clara will have but a dull time of it there during her brother's absence,' said the stranger.

'Out no !—he has her aften jinketing about, and back and forward, wi' a' the fine flichtering fools that come yonder; and clapping palms wi' them, and linking at their dances and daffings. I wuss nae ill come o't, but it 's a shame her father's daughter should keep company wi' a' that scauff and raff of physic-students, and writers' prentices, and bagmen, and siclike trash as are down at the Well yonder.'

'You are severe, Mrs. Dods,' replied the guest. 'No doubt Miss Clara's conduct deserves all sort of freedom.'

'I am saying naething against her conduct,' said the dame; 'and there 's nae ground to say onything that I ken of—But I wad hae like draw to like, Maister Francie. I never quarrelled the ball that the gentry used to hae at my bit house a gude wheen years bygane—when they came, the auld folk in their coaches, wi' lang-tailed black horses, and a wheen galliard gallants on their hunting horses, and mony a decent leddy behind her ain goodman, and mony

a bonny smirking lassie on her pownie, and wha sae happy as they—And what for no ? And then there was the farmers' ball, wi' the tight lads of yeomen with the brank new blues and the buckskins—These were decent meetings —but then they were a' ae man's bairns that were at them, ilk ane kend ilk other—they danced farmers wi' farmers' daughters, at the tane, and gentles wi' gentle blood, at the t'other, unless maybe when some of the gentlemen of the Killnakelty Club would gie me a round of the floor mysell, in the way of daffing and fun, and me no able to flyte on them for laughing—I am sure I never grudged these innocent pleasures, although it has cost me maybe a week's redding up, ere I got the better of the confusion.'

'But, dame,' said Tyrell, 'this ceremonial would be a little hard upon strangers like myself, for how were we to find partners in these family parties of yours ? '

'Never you fash your thumb about that, Maister Francie,' returned the landlady, with a knowing wink.—'Every Jack will find a Jill, gang the world as it may—and, at the warst o't, better hae some fashery in finding a partner for the night, than get yoked with ane that you may not be able to shake off the morn.'

'And does that sometimes happen ? ' asked the stranger.

'Happen !—and is 't amang the Well folk that ye mean ? ' exclaimed the hostess. 'Was it not the last season, as they ca't, no farther gane, that young Sir Bingo Binks, the English lad wi' the red coat, that keeps a mail-coach, and drives it himsell, gat cleekit with Miss Rachel Bonnyrigg, the auld Leddy Loupengirth's lang-legged daughter—and they danced sae lang thegither, that there was mair said than suld hae been said about it—and the lad would fain have louped back, but the auld leddy held him to his tackle, and the Commissary Court and somebody else made her Leddy Binks in spite of Sir Bingo's heart—and he has never daured take her to his friends in England, but they have just wintered and summered it at the Well ever since—and that is what the Well is good for ! '

'And does Clara,—I mean does Miss Mowbray, keep company with such women as these ? ' said Tyrrel with a tone of interest which he checked as he proceeded with the question.

'What can she do, puir thing?' said the dame. 'She maun keep the company that her brother keeps, for she is clearly dependent. But, speaking of that, I ken what *I* have to do, and that is no little, before it darkens. I have sat clavering with you ower lang, Maister Francie.'

And away she marched with a resolved step, and soon the clear octaves of her voice were heard in shrill admonition to her handmaidens.

Tyrrel paused a moment in deep thought, then took his hat, paid a visit to the stable, where his horse saluted him with feathering ears, and that low amicable neigh with which that animal acknowledges the approach of a loving and beloved friend. Having seen that the faithful creature was in every respect attended to, Tyrrel availed himself of the continued and lingering twilight, to visit the old castle, which, upon former occasions, had been his favourite evening walk. He remained while the light permitted, admiring the prospect we attempted to describe in the first chapter, and comparing, as in his former reverie, the faded hues of the glimmering landscape to those of human life, when early youth and hope had ceased to gild them.

A brisk walk to the inn, and a light supper on a Welsh rabbit and the dame's home-brewed, were stimulants of livelier, at least more resigned, thoughts—and the Blue bedroom, to the honour of which he had been promoted, received him a contented, if not a cheerful, tenant.

CHAPTER III

ADMINISTRATION

There must be government in all society—
Bees have their Queen, and stag herds have their leaders;
Rome had her Consuls, Athens had her Archons,
And we, sir, have our Managing Committee.
The Album of Saint Ronan's.

Francis Tyrrel was, in the course of the next day, formally settled in his own old quarters, where he announced his purpose of remaining for several days. The old-established carrier of the place brought his fishing-rod and

travelling-trunk, with a letter to Meg, dated a week previously, desiring her to prepare to receive an old acquaintance. This annunciation, though something of the latest, Meg received with great complacency, observing, it was a civil attention in Maister Tirl; and that John Hislop, though he was not just sae fast, was far surer than ony post of them a', or express either. She also observed with satisfaction that there was no gun-case along with her guest's baggage; 'for that weary gunning had brought him and her into trouble—the lairds had cried out upon 't, as if she made her house a howff for common fowlers and poachers; and yet how could she hinder twa daft hempie callants from taking a start and an ower-loup?[1] They had been ower the neighbour's ground they had leave on up to the march, and they werena just to ken meiths when the moorfowl got up.'

In a day or two, her guest fell into such quiet and solitary habits, that Meg, herself the most restless and bustling of human creatures, began to be vexed, for want of the trouble which she expected to have had with him, experiencing, perhaps, the same sort of feeling from his extreme and passive indifference on all points, that a good horseman has for the over-patient steed, which he can scarce feel under him. His walks were devoted to the most solitary recesses among the neighbouring woods and hills—his fishing-rod was often left behind him, or carried merely as an apology for sauntering slowly by the banks of some little brooklet—and his success so indifferent, that Meg said the piper of Peebles[2] would have caught a creelfu' before Maister Francie had made out the half-dozen; so that he was obliged, for peace's sake, to vindicate his character by killing a handsome salmon.

Tyrrel's painting, as Meg called it, went on equally slowly: He often, indeed, showed her the sketches which he brought from his walks, and used to finish at home; but Meg held them very cheap. What signified, she said, a wheen bits of paper, wi' black and white scarts upon them, that he ca'd bushes, and trees, and craigs?—Couldna he paint them wi' green, and blue, and yellow, like the other

[1] The usual expression for a slight encroachment on a neighbour's property.

[2] The said piper was famous at the mystery.

folk ? 'Ye will never mak your bread that way, Maister Francie. Ye suld munt up a muckle square of canvas, like Dick Tinto, and paint folk's ainsells, that they like muckle better to see than ony craig in the hail water; and I wadna muckle objeck even to some of the Wallers coming up and sitting to ye. They waste their time waur, I wis—and, I warrant, ye might mak a guinea a-head of them. Dick made twa, but he was an auld used hand, and folk maun creep before they gang.'

In answer to these remonstrances, Tyrrel assured her, that the sketches with which he busied himself were held of such considerable value, that very often an artist in that line received much higher remuneration for these than for portraits or coloured drawings. He added, that they were often taken for the purpose of illustrating popular poems, and hinted as if he himself were engaged in some labour of that nature.

Eagerly did Meg long to pour forth to Nelly Trotter, the fish-woman,—whose cart formed the only neutral channel of communication between the Auld Town and the Well, and who was in favour with Meg, because, as Nelly passed her door in her way to the Well, she always had the first choice of her fish,—the merits of her lodger as an artist. Luckie Dods had, in truth, been so much annoyed and bullied, as it were, with the report of clever persons, accomplished in all sorts of excellence, arriving day after day at the hotel, that she was overjoyed in this fortunate opportunity to triumph over them in their own way; and it may be believed, that the excellences of her lodger lost nothing by being trumpeted through her mouth.

'I maun hae the best of the cart, Nelly—if you and me can gree—for it is for ane of the best of painters. Your fine folk down yonder would gie their lugs to look at what he has been doing—he gets gowd in goupins, for three downright scarts and three cross anes—And he is no an ungrateful loon, like Dick Tinto, that had nae sooner my good five-and-twenty shillings in his pocket, than he gaed down to birl it awa at their bonny hottle yonder, but a decent quiet lad, that kens when he is weel aff, and bides still at the auld howff—And what for no ? Tell them all this, and hear what they will say till't.'

'Indeed, mistress, I can tell ye that already, without stirring my shanks for the matter,' answered Nelly Trotter; 'they will e'en say that ye are ae auld fule, and me anither, that may hae some judgement in cock-bree or in scate-rumples, but mauna fash our beards about onything else.'

'Wad they say sae, the frontless villains? and me been a housekeeper this thirty year!' exclaimed Meg; 'I wadna hae them say it to my face! But I am no speaking without warrant—for what an I had spoken to the minister, lass, and shown him ane of the loose scarts of paper that Maister Tirl leaves fleeing about his room?—and what an he had said he had kend Lord Bidmore gie five guineas for the waur on 't? and a' the warld kens he was lang tutor in the Bidmore family.'

'Troth,' answered her gossip, 'I doubt if I was to tell a' this they would hardly believe me, mistress; for there are sae mony judges amang them, and they think sae muckle of themsells, and sae little of other folk, that unless ye were to send down the bit picture, I am no thinking they will believe a word that I can tell them.'

'No believe what an honest woman says—let abee to say twa o' them?' exclaimed Meg; 'Oh the unbelieving generation! Weel, Nelly, since my back is up, ye sall tak down the picture, or sketching, or whatever it is (though I thought sketchers[1] were ay made of airn), and shame wi' it the conceited crew that they are. But see and bring 't back wi' ye again, Nelly, for it 's a thing of value; and trustna it out o' your hand, *that* I charge you, for I lippen no muckle to their honesty. And, Nelly, ye may tell them he has an illustrated poem—*illustrated*—mind the word, Nelly—that is to be stuck as fou of the like o' that, as ever turkey was larded wi' dabs o' bacon.'

Thus furnished with her credentials, and acting the part of a herald betwixt two hostile countries, honest Nelly switched her little fish-cart downwards to Saint Ronan's Well.

In watering-places, as in other congregated assemblies of the human species, various kinds of government have been dictated, by chance, caprice, or convenience; but in

[1] Skates are called sketchers in Scotland.

almost all of them, some sort of direction has been adopted to prevent the consequences of anarchy. Sometimes the sole power has been vested in a master of ceremonies ; but this, like other despotisms, has been of late unfashionable, and the powers of this great officer have been much limited even at Bath, where Nash once ruled with undisputed supremacy. Committees of management, chosen from among the most steady guests, have been in general resorted to as a more liberal mode of sway, and to such was confided the administration of the infant republic of Saint Ronan's Well. This little senate, it must be observed, had the more difficult task in discharging their high duties, that, like those of other republics, their subjects were divided into two jarring and contending factions, who every day eat, drank, danced, and made merry together, hating each other all the while with all the animosity of political party, endeavouring, by every art, to secure the adherence of each guest who arrived, and ridiculing the absurdities and follies of each other, with all the wit and bitterness of which they were masters.

At the head of one of these parties was no less a personage than Lady Penelope Penfeather, to whom the establishment owed its fame, nay, its existence ; and whose influence could only have been balanced by that of the lord of the manor, Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's, or, as he was called usually by the company who affected what Meg called knapping English, the squire, who was leader of the opposite faction.

The rank and fortune of the lady, her pretensions to beauty as well as talent (though the former was something faded), and the consequence which she arrogated to herself as a woman of fashion, drew round her painters, and poets, and philosophers, and men of science, and lecturers, and foreign adventurers, *et hoc genus omne*.

On the contrary, the squire's influence, as a man of family and property in the immediate neighbourhood, who actually kept greyhounds and pointers, and at least talked of hunters and of racers, ascertained him the support of the whole class of bucks, half and whole bred, from the three next counties ; and if more inducements were wanting, he could grant his favourites the privilege of shooting over his moors;

which is enough to turn the head of a young Scottishman at any time. Mr. Mowbray was of late especially supported in his pre-eminence by a close alliance with Sir Bingo Binks, a sapient English baronet, who, ashamed, as many thought, to return to his own country, had set him down at the Well of Saint Ronan's, to enjoy the blessing which the Caledonian Hymen had so kindly forced on him, in the person of Miss Rachel Bonnyrigg. As this gentleman actually drove a regular-built mail-coach, not in any respect differing from that of his Majesty, only that it was more frequently overturned, his influence with a certain set was irresistible, and the squire of Saint Ronan's, having the better sense of the two, contrived to reap the full benefit of the consequence attached to his friendship.

These two contending parties were so equally balanced that the predominance of the influence of either was often determined by the course of the sun. Thus, in the morning and forenoon, when Lady Penelope led forth her herd to lawn and shady bower, whether to visit some ruined monument of ancient times, or eat their picnic luncheon, to spoil good paper with bad drawings, and good verses with repetition—in a word,

> To rave, recite, and madden round the land,

her ladyship's empire over the loungers seemed uncontrolled and absolute, and all things were engaged in the *tourbillon*, of which she formed the pivot and centre. Even the hunters, and shooters, and hard drinkers, were sometimes fain reluctantly to follow in her train, sulking, and quizzing, and flouting at her solemn festivals, besides encouraging the younger nymphs to giggle when they should have looked sentimental. But after dinner the scene was changed, and her ladyship's sweetest smiles, and softest invitations, were often insufficient to draw the neutral part of the company to the tea-room ; so that her society was reduced to those whose constitution or finances rendered early retirement from the dining-parlour a matter of convenience, together with the more devoted and zealous of her own immediate dependents and adherents. Even the faith of the latter was apt to be debauched. Her ladyship's poet-laureate, in whose behalf she was teasing each new-comer

for subscriptions, got sufficiently independent to sing in her ladyship's presence, at supper, a song of rather equivocal meaning ; and her chief painter, who was employed upon an illustrated copy of the *Loves of the Plants*, was, at another time, seduced into such a state of pot-valour, that, upon her ladyship's administering her usual dose of criticism upon his works, he not only bluntly disputed her judgement, but talked something of his right to be treated like a gentleman.

These feuds were taken up by the managing committee, who interceded for the penitent offenders on the following morning, and obtained their re-establishment in Lady Penelope's good graces upon moderate terms. Many other acts of moderating authority they performed, much to the assuaging of faction, and the quiet of the Wellers ; and so essential was their government to the prosperity of the place, that, without them, Saint Ronan's spring would probably have been speedily deserted. We must, therefore, give a brief sketch of that potential committee, which both factions, acting as if on a self-denying ordinance, had combined to invest with the reins of government.

Each of its members appeared to be selected, as Fortunio, in the fairy-tale, chose his followers, for his peculiar gifts. First on the list stood the MAN OF MEDICINE, Dr. Quentin Quackleben, who claimed right to regulate medical matters at the spring, upon the principle which, of old, assigned the property of a newly discovered country to the buccaneer who committed the earliest piracy on its shores. The acknowledgement of the doctor's merit, as having been first to proclaim and vindicate the merits of these healing fountains, had occasioned his being universally installed First Physician and Man of Science, which last qualification he could apply to all purposes, from the boiling of an egg to the giving a lecture. He was, indeed, qualified, like many of his profession, to spread both the bane and antidote before a dyspeptic patient, being as knowing a gastronome as Dr. Redgill himself, or any other worthy physician who has written for the benefit of the *cuisine*, from Dr. Moncrieff of Tippermalloch, to the late Dr. Hunter of York, and the present Dr. Kitchener of London. But pluralities are always invidious, and therefore the doctor prudently relinquished the office of caterer and head carver to the Man of Taste,

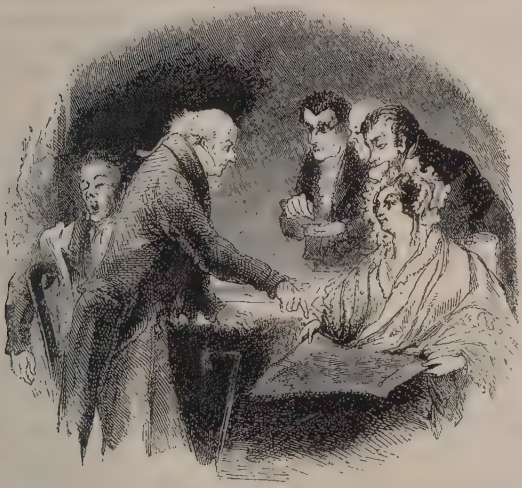
who occupied regularly, and *ex officio*, the head of the table, reserving to himself the occasional privilege of criticizing, and a principle share in consuming, the good things which the common entertainment afforded. We have only to sum up this brief account of the learned doctor, by informing the reader that he was a tall, lean, beetle-browed man, with an ill-made black scratch-wig, that stared out on either side from his lantern jaws. He resided nine months out of the twelve at Saint Ronan's, and was supposed to make an indifferent good thing of it, especially as he played whist to admiration.

First in place, though perhaps second to the doctor in real authority, was Mr. Winterblossom; a civil sort of person, who was nicely precise in his address, wore his hair cued, and dressed with powder, had knee-buckles set with Bristol stones, and a seal-ring as large as Sir John Falstaff's. In his hey-day he had a small estate, which he had spent like a gentleman, by mixing with the gay world. He was, in short, one of those respectable links that connect the coxcombs of the present day with those of the last age, and could compare, in his own experience, the follies of both. In latter days, he had sense enough to extricate himself from his course of dissipation, though with impaired health and impoverished fortune.

Mr. Winterblossom now lived upon a moderate annuity, and had discovered a way of reconciling his economy with much company and made dishes, by acting as perpetual president of the table d'hôte at the Well. Here he used to amuse the society by telling stories about Garrick, Foote, Bonnel Thornton, and Lord Kelly, and delivering his opinions in matters of taste and vertu. An excellent carver, he knew how to help each guest to what was precisely his due; and never failed to reserve a proper slice as the reward of his own labours. To conclude, he was possessed of some taste in the fine arts, at least in painting and music, although it was rather of the technical kind than that which warms the heart and elevates the feelings. There was indeed, about Winterblossom, nothing that was either warm or elevated. He was shrewd, selfish, and sensual; the last two of which qualities he screened from observation under a specious varnish of exterior com-

plaisance. Therefore, in his professed and apparent anxiety to do the honours of the table, to the most punctilious point of good breeding, he never permitted the attendants upon the public taste to supply the wants of others until all his own private comforts had been fully arranged and provided for.

Mr. Winterblossom was also distinguished for possessing a few curious engravings, and other specimens of art, with



MR. WINTERBLOSSOM EXHIBITING HIS ENGRAVINGS

the exhibition of which he occasionally beguiled a wet morning at the public room. They were collected, *viis et modis*, said the Man of Law, another distinguished member of the committee, with a knowing cock of his eye to his next neighbour.

Of this person little need be said. He was a large-boned, loud-voiced, red-faced old man, named Meiklewham ; a country writer, or attorney, who managed the matters of the squire much to the profit of one or other,—if not of both. His nose projected from the front of his broad

vulgar face, like the style of an old sun-dial, twisted all of one side. He was as great a bully in his profession as if it had been military instead of civil; conducted the whole technicalities concerning the cutting up the Saint's-Wellhaugh, so much lamented by Dame Dods, into building-stances, and was on excellent terms with Doctor Quackleben, who always recommended him to make the wills of his patients.

After the Man of Law comes Captain Hector MacTurk, a Highland lieutenant on half-pay, and that of ancient standing; one who preferred toddy of the strongest to wine, and in that fashion and cold drams finished about a bottle of whisky *per diem*, whenever he could come by it. He was called the Man of Peace, on the same principle which assigns to constables, Bow-street runners, and such like, who carry bludgeons to break folk's heads, and are perpetually and officially employed in scenes of riot, the title of peace-officers—that is, because by his valour he compelled others to act with discretion. The captain was the general referee in all those abortive quarrels, which, at a place of this kind, are so apt to occur at night, and to be quietly settled in the morning; and occasionally adopted a quarrel himself, by way of taking down any guest who was unusually pugnacious. This occupation procured Captain MacTurk a good deal of respect at the Well; for he was precisely that sort of person who is ready to fight with any one—whom no one can find an apology for declining to fight with,—in fighting with whom considerable danger was incurred, for he was ever and anon showing that he could snuff a candle with a pistol-ball,—and lastly, through fighting with whom no éclat or credit could redound to the antagonist. He always wore a blue coat and red collar, had a supercilious taciturnity of manner, ate sliced leeks with his cheese, and resembled in complexion a Dutch red-herring.

Still remains to be mentioned the Man of Religion—the gentle Mr. Simon Chatterly, who had strayed to Saint Ronan's Well from the banks of Cam or Isis, and who piqued himself, first on his Greek, and secondly, on his politeness to the ladies. During all the week-days, as Dame Dods has already hinted, this reverend gentleman was the partner at the whist-table, or in the ball-room, to what

maid or matron soever lacked a partner at either; and on the Sundays, he read prayers in the public room to all who chose to attend. He was also a deviser of charades, and an unriddler of riddles; he played a little on the flute, and was Mr. Winterblossom's principal assistant in contriving those ingenious and romantic paths, by which, as by the zig-zags which connect military parallels, you were enabled to ascend to the top of the hill behind the hotel, which commands so beautiful a prospect, at exactly that precise angle of ascent, which entitles a gentleman to offer his arm, and a lady to accept it, with perfect propriety.

There was yet another member of this select committee, Mr. Michael Meredith, who might be termed the Man of Mirth, or, if you please, the Jack Pudding to the company, whose business it was to crack the best joke, and sing the best song—he could. Unluckily, however, this functionary was for the present obliged to absent himself from Saint Ronan's; for, not recollecting that he did not actually wear the privileged motley of his profession, he had passed some jest upon Captain MacTurk, which cut so much to the quick that Mr. Meredith was fain to go to goat-whey quarters, at some ten miles' distance, and remain there in a sort of concealment, until the affair should be made up through the mediation of his brethren of the committee.

Such were the honest gentlemen who managed the affairs of this rising settlement, with as much impartiality as could be expected. They were not indeed without their own secret predilections; for the lawyer and the soldier privately inclined to the party of the squire, while the parson, Mr. Meredith, and Mr. Winterblossom, were more devoted to the interests of Lady Penelope; so that Doctor Quackleben alone, who probably recollected that the gentlemen were as liable to stomach complaints as the ladies to nervous disorders, seemed the only person who preserved in word and deed the most rigid neutrality. Nevertheless, the interests of the establishment being very much at the heart of this honourable council, and each feeling his own profit, pleasure, or comfort in some degree involved, they suffered not their private affections to interfere with their public duties, but acted every one in his own sphere, for the public benefit of the whole community.

CHAPTER IV

THE INVITATION

Thus painters write their names at Co.—Prior.

The clamour which attends the removal of dinner from a public room had subsided; the clatter of plates and knives and forks—the bustling tread of awkward boobies of country servants, kicking each other's shins, and wrangling as they endeavour to rush out of the door three abreast—the clash of glasses and tumblers, borne to earth in the tumult—the shrieks of the landlady—the curses, not loud, but deep, of the landlord—had all passed away; and those of the company who had servants, had been accommodated by their respective Ganymedes with such remnants of their respective bottles of wine, spirits, &c. as the said Ganymedes had not previously consumed, while the rest, broken into such observance by Mr. Winterblossom, waited patiently until the worthy president's own special and multifarious commissions had been executed by a tidy young woman and a lumpish lad, the regular attendants belonging to the house, but whom he permitted to wait on no one, till, as the hymn says,

All his wants were well supplied.

'And, Dinah—my bottle of pale sherry, Dinah—place it on this side—there is a good girl;—and, Toby—get my jug with the hot water—and let it be boiling—and don't spill it on Lady Penelope, if you can help it, Toby.'

'No—for her ladyship has been in hot water to-day already,' said the squire; a sarcasm to which Lady Penelope only replied with a look of contempt.

'And, Dinah, bring the sugar—the soft East India sugar, Dinah—and a lemon, Dinah, one of those which came fresh to-day—Go fetch it from the bar, Toby—and don't tumble downstairs, if you can help it. And Dinah—stay, Dinah—the nutmeg, Dinah, and the ginger, my good girl—And, Dinah—put the cushion up behind my back—and

the footstool to my foot, for my toe is something the worse of my walk with your ladyship this morning to the top of Belvedere.'

'Her ladyship may call it what she pleases in common parlance,' said the writer; 'but it must stand Muntgrunzie in the stamped paper, being so nominated in the ancient writs and evidents thereof.'

'And, Dinah,' continued the president, 'lift up my handkerchief—and—a bit of biscuit, Dinah—and—and I do not think I want anything else—Look to the company, my good girl. I have the honour to drink the company's very good health—Will your ladyship honour me by accepting a glass of negus? I learned to make negus from old Dartineuf's son. He always used East India sugar, and added a tamarind—it improves the flavour infinitely. Dinah, see your father sends for some tamarinds.—Dartineuf knew a good thing almost as well as his father—I met him at Bath in the year—let me see—Garrick was just taking leave, and that was in,' &c., &c., &c.—'And what is this now, Dinah?' he said, as she put into his hand a roll of paper.

'Something that Nelly Trotter' (Trotting Nelly, as the company called her) 'brought from a sketching gentleman that lives at the woman's' (thus bluntly did the upstart minx describe the reverend Mrs. Margaret Dods) 'at the Cleikum of Aultoun yonder'—A name, by the way, which the inn had acquired from the use which the saint upon the sign-post was making of his pastoral crook.

'Indeed, Dinah?' said Mr. Winterblossom, gravely taking out his spectacles, and wiping them before he opened the roll of paper; 'some boy's daubing, I suppose, whose pa and ma wish to get him into the Trustees' School, and so are beating about for a little interest. But I am drained dry—I put three lads in last season; and if it had not been my particular interest with the secretary, who asks my opinion now and then, I could not have managed it. But giff gaff, say I. Eh! What, in the devil's name, is this? Here is both force and keeping—Who can this be, my lady? Do but see the sky-line—why, this is really a little bit—an exquisite little bit—Who the devil can it be? and how can he have stumbled upon the dog-hole in the Old Town,

and the snarling b—— I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons—that kennels there ? '

' I dare say, my lady,' said a little miss of fourteen, her eyes growing rounder and rounder, and her cheeks redder and redder, as she found herself speaking, and so many folks listening—'Oh, la! I dare say it is the same gentleman we met one day in the Low-wood walk, that looked like a gentleman, and yet was none of the company, and that you said was a handsome man.'

' I did not say handsome, Maria,' replied her ladyship ; ' ladies never say men are handsome—I only said he looked genteel and interesting.'

' And that, my lady,' said the young parson, bowing and smiling, ' is, I will be judged by the company, the more flattering compliment of the two—We shall be jealous of this Unknown presently.'

' Nay, but,' continued the sweetly communicative Maria, with some real and some assumed simplicity, ' your ladyship forgets—for you said presently after, you were sure he was no gentleman, for he did not run after you with your glove which you had dropped—and so I went back myself to find your ladyship's glove, and he never offered to help me, and I saw him closer than your ladyship did, and I am sure he is handsome, though he is not very civil.'

' You speak a little too much and too loud, miss,' said Lady Penelope, a natural blush reinforcing the nuance of rouge by which it was usually superseded.

' What say you to that, Squire Mowbray ? ' said the elegant Sir Bingo Binks.

' A fair challenge to the field, Sir Bingo,' answered the squire ; ' when a lady throws down the gauntlet, a gentleman may throw the handkerchief.'

' I have always the benefit of *your* best construction, Mr. Mowbray,' said the lady, with dignity. ' I suppose Miss Maria has contrived this pretty story for your amusement. I can hardly answer to Mr. Digges, for bringing her into company where she receives encouragement to behave so.'

' Nay, nay, my lady,' said the president, ' you must let the jest pass by ; and since this is really such an admirable sketch, you must honour us with your opinion, whether

the company can consistently with propriety make any advances to this man.'

'In my opinion,' said her ladyship, the angry spot still glowing on her brow, 'there are enough of *men* among us already—I wish I could say gentlemen—As matters stand, I see little business *ladies* can have at Saint Ronan's.'

This was an intimation which always brought the squire back to good-breeding, which he could make use of when he pleased. He deprecated her ladyship's displeasure, until she told him, in returning good humour, that she really would not trust him unless he brought his sister to be security for his future politeness.

'Clara, my lady,' said Mowbray, 'is a little wilful; and I believe your ladyship must take the task of unharbouring her into your own hands. What say you to a gipsy party up to my old shop? It is a bachelor's house—you must not expect things in much order; but Clara would be honoured'——

The Lady Penelope eagerly accepted the proposal of something like a party, and, quite reconciled with Mowbray, began to inquire whether she might bring the stranger artist with her, 'that is,' said her ladyship, looking to Dinah, 'if he be a gentleman.'

Here Dinah interposed her assurance, 'that the gentleman at Meg Dods's was quite and clean a gentleman, and an illustrated poet besides.'

'An illustrated poet, Dinah?' said Lady Penelope; 'you must mean an illustrious poet.'

'I dare to say your ladyship is right,' said Dinah, dropping a curtsy.

A joyous flutter of impatient anxiety was instantly excited through all the blue-stocking faction of the company, nor were the news totally indifferent to the rest of the community. The former belonged to that class, who, like the young Ascanius, are ever beating about in quest of a tawny lion, though they are much more successful in now and then starting a great bore;[1] and the others, having

[1] The one or the other was equally *in votis* to Ascanius,—

Optat aprum, aut fulvum descendere monte leonem.

Modern Trojans make a great distinction betwixt these two objects of chase.

left all their own ordinary affairs and subjects of interest at home, were glad to make a matter of importance of the most trivial occurrence. A mighty poet, said the former class—who could it possibly be? All names were recited—all Britain scrutinized, from Highland hills to the Lakes of Cumberland—from Sydenham Common to Saint James's Place—even the Banks of the Bosphorus were explored for some name which might rank under this distinguished epithet. And then, besides his illustrious poesy, to sketch so inimitably!—who *could* it be? And all the gapers, who had nothing of their own to suggest, answered with the antistrophe, 'Who could it be?'

The Claret Club, which comprised the choicest and firmest adherents of Squire Mowbray and the baronet—men who scorned that the reversion of one bottle of wine should furnish forth the feast of to-morrow, though caring naught about either of the fine arts in question, found out an interest of their own, which centred in the same individual.

'I say, little Sir Bingo,' said the squire, 'this is the very fellow that we saw down at the Willow-slack on Saturday—he was togged gnostically enough, and cast twelve yards of line with one hand—the fly fell like a thistledown on the water.'

'Uich!' answered the party he addressed, in the accents of a dog choking in the collar.

'We saw him pull out the salmon yonder,' said Mowbray; 'you remember—clean fish—the tideticks on his gills—weighed, I dare say, a matter of eighteen pounds.'

'Sixteen!' replied Sir Bingo, in the same tone of strangulation.

'None of your rigs, Bing!' said his companion, 'nearer eighteen than sixteen!'

'Nearer sixteen, by ——!'

'Will you go a dozen of blue on it to the company?' said the squire.

'No, d— me!' croaked the baronet—'to our own set I will.'

'Then I say done!' quoth the squire.

And 'Done!' responded the knight; and out came their red pocket-books.

'But who shall decide the bet?' said the squire.

'The genius himself, I suppose; they talk of asking him here, but I suppose he will scarce mind quizzes like them.'

'Write myself—John Mowbray,' said the baronet.

'You, baronet!—you write!' answered the squire, 'd—me, that cock won't fight—you won't.'

'I will,' growled Sir Bingo, more articulately than usual.

'Why, you can't!' said Mowbray. 'You never wrote a line in your life, save those you were whipped for at school.'

'I can write—I will write!' said Sir Bingo. 'Two to one I will.'

And there the affair rested, for the counsel of the company were in high consultation concerning the most proper manner of opening a communication with the mysterious stranger; and the voice of Mr. Winterblossom, whose tones, originally fine, age had reduced to falsetto, was calling upon the whole party for 'Order, order!' So that the bucks were obliged to lounge in silence, with both arms reclined on the table, and testifying, by coughs and yawns, their indifference to the matters in question, while the rest of the company debated upon them, as if they were matters of life and death.

'A visit from one of the gentlemen—Mr. Winterblossom, if he would take the trouble,—in name of the company at large—would, Lady Penelope Penfeather presumed to think, be a necessary preliminary to an invitation.'

Mr. Winterblossom was 'quite of her ladyship's opinion, and would gladly have been the personal representative of the company at Saint Ronan's Well—but it was uphill—her ladyship knew his tyrant, the gout, was hovering upon the frontiers—there were other gentlemen, younger, and more worthy to fly at the lady's command than an ancient Vulcan like him,—there was the valiant Mars and the eloquent Mercury.'

Thus speaking, he bowed to Captain MacTurk and the Rev. Mr. Simon Chatterly, and reclined on his chair, sipping his negus with the self-satisfied smile of one, who, by a pretty speech, has rid himself of a troublesome commission. At the same time, by an act probably of mental absence, he put in his pocket the drawing, which, after

circulating around the table, had returned back to the chair of the president, being the point from which it had set out.

'By Cot, madam,' said Captain MacTurk, 'I should be proud to obey your leddyship's commands—but, by Cot, I never call first on any man that never called upon me at all, unless it were to carry him a friend's message, or such-like.'

'Twig the old connoisseur,' said the squire to the knight, —'He is condiddling the drawing.'

'Go it, Johnnie Mowbray—pour it into him,' whispered Sir Bingo.

'Thank ye for nothing, Sir Bingo,' said the squire, in the same tone. 'Winterblossom is one of us—*was* one of us at least—and won't stand the ironing. He has his Wogdens still, that were right things in his day, and can hit the haystack with the best of us—but stay, they are halloing on the parson.'

They were indeed busied on all hands, to obtain Mr. Chatterly's consent to wait on the genius unknown; but though he smiled and simpered, and was absolutely incapable of saying No, he begged leave, in all humility, to decline that commission. 'The truth was,' he pleaded in his excuse, 'that having one day walked to visit the old castle of Saint Ronan's, and returning through the Auld Town, as it was popularly called, he had stopped at the door of the *Cleikum*' (pronounced *Anglicè*, with the open diphthong), 'in hopes to get a glass of syrup of capillaire, or a draught of something cooling; and had in fact expressed his wishes, and was knocking pretty loudly, when a sash-window was thrown suddenly up, and ere he was aware what was about to happen, he was soused with a deluge of water (as he said), while the voice of an old hag from within assured him that if that did not cool him there was another biding him,—an intimation which induced him to retreat in all haste from the repetition of this shower-bath.'

All laughed at the account of the chaplain's misfortune, the history of which seemed to be wrung from him reluctantly, by the necessity of assigning some weighty cause for declining to execute the ladies' commands. But the squire and baronet continued their mirth far longer than decorum

allowed, flinging themselves back in their chairs, with their hands thrust into their side-pockets, and their mouths expanded with unrestrained enjoyment, until the sufferer, angry, disconcerted, and endeavouring to look scornful, incurred another general burst of laughter on all hands.

When Mr. Winterblossom had succeeded in restoring some degree of order, he found the mishaps of the young divine proved as intimidating as ludicrous. Not one of the company chose to go envoy-extraordinary to the dominions of Queen Meg, who might be suspected of paying little respect to the sanctity of an ambassador's person. And what was worse, when it was resolved that a civil card from Mr. Winterblossom, in the name of the company, should be sent to the stranger, instead of a personal visit, Dinah informed them that she was sure no one about the house could be bribed to carry up a letter of the kind; for, when such an event had taken place two summers since, Meg, who construed it into an attempt to seduce from her tenement the invited guest, had so handled a ploughboy who carried the letter, that he fled the country-side altogether, and never thought himself safe till he was at a village ten miles off, where it was afterwards learned he enlisted with a recruiting party, choosing rather to face the French than to return within the sphere of Meg's displeasure.

Just while they were agitating this new difficulty, a prodigious clamour was heard without, which, to the first apprehensions of the company, seemed to be Meg, in all her terrors, come to anticipate the proposed invasion. Upon inquiry, however, it proved to be her gossip, Trotting Nelly, or Nelly Trotter, in the act of forcing her way upstairs, against the united strength of the whole household of the hotel, to reclaim Luckie Dods's picture, as she called it. This made the connoisseur's treasure tremble in his pocket, who, thrusting a half-crown into Toby's hand, exhorted him to give it her, and try his influence in keeping her back. Toby, who knew Nelly's nature, put the half-crown into his own pocket, and snatched up a gill-stoup of whisky from the sideboard. Thus armed, he boldly confronted the virago, and interposing a *remora*, which was able to check poor Nelly's course in her most determined moods, not only succeeded in averting the immediate storm which

approached the company in general, and Mr. Winterblossom in particular, but brought the guests the satisfactory information that Trotting Nelly had agreed, after she had slept out her nap in the barn, to convey their commands to the Unknown of Cleikum of Aultoun.

Mr. Winterblossom, therefore, having authenticated his proceedings, by inserting in the minutes of the committee the authority which he had received, wrote his card in the best style of diplomacy, and sealed it with the seal of the Spa, which bore something like a nymph, seated beside what was designed to represent an urn.

The rival factions, however, did not trust entirely to this official invitation. Lady Penelope was of opinion that they should find some way of letting the stranger—a man of talent unquestionably—understand that there were in the society to which he was invited, spirits of a more select sort, who felt worthy to intrude themselves on his solitude.

Accordingly, her ladyship imposed upon the elegant Mr. Chatterly the task of expressing the desire of the company to see the unknown artist, in a neat occasional copy of verses. The poor gentleman's muse, however, proved unpropitious ; for he was able to proceed no further than two lines in half an hour, which, coupled with its variations, we insert from the blotted manuscript, as Dr. Johnson has printed the alterations in Pope's version of the Iliad :

1. *Maids.* 2. *Dames.* *unity joining.*
The [nymphs] of Saint Ronan's [in purpose combining]
1. *Swain.* 2. *Man.*
To the [youth] who is great both in verse and designing,
- - - - - - - dining.

The eloquence of a prose billet was necessarily resorted to in the absence of the heavenly muse, and the said billet was secretly entrusted to the care of Trotting Nelly. The same trusty emissary, when refreshed by her nap among the pease-straw, and about to harness her cart for her return to the sea-coast (in the course of which she was to pass the Aultoun), received another card, written, as he had threatened, by Sir Bingo Binks himself, who had given himself this trouble to secure the settlement of the bet; conjecturing that a man with a fashionable exterior, who

could throw twelve yards of line at a cast with such precision, might consider the invitation of Winterblossom as that of an old twaddler, and care as little for the good graces of an affected blue-stocking and her coterie, whose conversation, in Sir Bingo's mind, relished of nothing but of weak tea and bread and butter. Thus the happy Mr. Francis Tyrrel received, considerably to his surprise, no less than three invitations at once from the Well of Saint Ronan's.

CHAPTER V

EPISTOLARY ELOQUENCE

But how can I answer, since first I must read thee ?—PRIOR.

DESIROUS of authenticating our more important facts, by as many original documents as possible we have, after much research, enabled ourselves to present the reader with the following accurate transcripts of the notes intrusted to the care of Trotting Nelly. The first ran thus :

'Mr. Winterblossom (of Silverhed) has the commands of Lady Penelope Penfeather, Sir Bingo and Lady Binks, Mr. and Miss Mowbray (of Saint Ronan's), and the rest of the company at the Hotel and Tontine Inn of Saint Ronan's Well, to express their hope that the gentleman lodged at the Cleikum Inn, Old Town of Saint Ronan's, will favour them with his company at the Ordinary, as early and as often as may suit his convenience. The COMPANY think it necessary to send this intimation, because, according to the RULES of the place, the Ordinary can only be attended by such gentlemen and ladies as lodge at Saint Ronan's Well; but they are happy to make a distinction in favour of a gentleman so distinguished for success in the fine arts as Mr.—— ——, residing at Cleikum. If Mr. —— —— should be inclined, upon becoming further acquainted with the COMPANY and RULES of the place, to remove his residence to the Well, Mr. Winterblossom, though he would not be understood to commit himself by a positive assurance to that effect, is inclined to hope that an arrangement might be

made, notwithstanding the extreme crowd of the season, to accommodate Mr. —— —— at the lodging-house called Lilliput Hall. It will much conduce to facilitate this negotiation, if Mr. —— —— would have the goodness to send an exact note of his stature, as Captain Rannletree seems disposed to resign the folding-bed at Lilliput Hall, on account of his finding it rather deficient in length. Mr. Winterblossom begs further to assure Mr. —— —— of the esteem in which he holds his genius, and of his high personal consideration.

'For —— ——, Esquire, Cleikum Inn,
Old Town of Saint Ronan's.'

'*The Public Rooms, Hotel and Tontine,*
Saint Ronan's Well, &c., &c., &c.'

The above card was written (we love to be precise in matters concerning orthography) in a neat, round, clerk-like hand, which, like Mr. Winterblossom's character, in many particulars was most accurate and commonplace, though betraying an affectation both of flourish and of facility.

The next billet was a contrast to the diplomatic gravity and accuracy of Mr. Winterblossom's official communication, and ran thus, the young divine's academic jests and classical flowers of eloquence being mingled with some wild-flowers from the teeming fancy of Lady Penelope.

'A choir of Dryads and Naiads, assembled at the healing spring of Saint Ronan's, have learned with surprise that a youth, gifted by Apollo, when the deity was prodigal, with two of his most esteemed endowments, wanders at will among their domains, frequenting grove and river, without once dreaming of paying homage to its tutelary deities. He is, therefore, summoned to their presence, and prompt obedience will ensure him forgiveness; but in case of contumacy, let him beware how he again essays either the lyre or the pallet.

'*Postscript.* The adorable Penelope, long enrolled among the goddesses for her beauty and virtues, gives Nectar and Ambrosia, which mortals call tea and cake, at the Public Rooms, near the Sacred Spring, on Thursday

evening, at eight o'clock, when the Muses never fail to attend. The stranger's presence is requested to participate in the delights of the evening.

'*Second Postscript.* A shepherd, ambitiously aiming at more accommodation than his narrow cot affords, leaves it in a day or two.

Assuredly the thing is to be hired.
As You Like It.

'*Postscript third.* Our Iris, whom mortals know as Trotting Nelly in her tartan cloak, will bring us the stranger's answer to our celestial summons.'

This letter was written in a delicate Italian hand, garnished with fine hair strokes and dashes, which were sometimes so dexterously thrown off as to represent lyres, pallets, vases, and other appropriate decorations, suited to the tenor of the contents.

The third epistle was a complete contrast to the other two. It was written in a coarse, irregular, schoolboy half-text, which, however, seemed to have cost the writer as much pains as if it had been a specimen of the most exquisite caligraphy. And these were the contents :—

'SUR—Jack Moobray has betted with me that the samon you killed on Saturday last weyd ni to eiteen pounds,—I say nyer sixteen.—So you being a spurtsman, 'tis refer'd.—So hope you will come or send me't; do not doubt you will be on honour. The bet is a dozen of claret, to be drank at the hotel by our own sett, on Monday next; and we beg you will make one; and Moobray hopes you will come down.—Being, sir, your most humbel servant,—Bingo Binks Baronet, and of Block-hall.

'*Postscript.* Have sent some loops of Indian gout, also some black hakkels of my groom's dressing; hope they will prove killing, as suiting river and season.'

No answer was received to any of these invitations for more than three days; which, while it secretly rather added to than diminished the curiosity of the Wellers concerning the Unknown, occasioned much railing in public against him, as ill-mannered and rude.

Meantime, Francis Tyrrel, to his great surprise, began to find, like the philosophers, that he was never less alone than when alone. In the most silent and sequestered walks, to which the present state of his mind induced him to betake himself, he was sure to find some strollers from the Well, to whom he had become the object of so much solicitous interest. Quite innocent of the knowledge that he himself possessed the attraction which occasioned his meeting them so frequently, he began to doubt whether the Lady Penelope and her maidens—Mr. Winterblossom and his grey pony—the parson and his short black coat and raven-grey pantaloons—were not either actually polygraphic copies of the same individuals, or possessed of a celerity of motion resembling omnipresence and ubiquity; for nowhere could he go without meeting them, and that oftener than once a day, in the course of his walks. Sometimes the presence of the sweet Lycoris was intimated by the sweet prattle in an adjacent shade; sometimes, when Tyrrel thought himself most solitary, the parson's flute was heard snoring forth 'Gramachree Molly'; and if he betook himself to the river, he was pretty sure to find his sport watched by Sir Bingo or some of his friends.

The efforts which Tyrrel made to escape from this persecution, and the impatience of it which his manner indicated, procured him, among the Wellers, the name of the *Misanthrope*; and, once distinguished as an object of curiosity, he was the person most attended to who could at the ordinary of the day give the most accurate account of where the Misanthrope had been, and how occupied in the course of the morning. And so far was Tyrrel's shyness from diminishing the desire of the Wellers for his society, that the latter feeling increased with the difficulty of gratification,—as the angler feels the most peculiar interest when throwing his fly for the most cunning and considerate trout in the pool.

In short, such was the interest which the excited imaginations of the company took in the Misanthrope, that, notwithstanding the unamiable qualities which the word expresses, there was only one of the society who did not desire to see the specimen at their rooms, for the purpose of examining him closely and at leisure; and the ladies

were particularly desirous to inquire whether he was actually a Misanthrope ? Whether he had been always a Misanthrope ? What had induced him to become a Misanthrope ? And whether there were no means of inducing him to cease to be a Misanthrope ?

One individual only, as we have said, neither desired to see nor hear more of the supposed Timon of Cleikum, and that was Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's. Through the medium of that venerable character John Pirner, professed weaver and practical black-fisher in the Aultoun of Saint Ronan's, who usually attended Tyrrel, to show him the casts of the river, carry his bag, and so forth, the squire had ascertained that the judgement of Sir Bingo regarding the disputed weight of the fish was more correct than his own. This inferred an immediate loss of honour, besides the payment of a heavy bill. And the consequences might be yet more serious ; nothing short of the emancipation of Sir Bingo, who had hitherto been Mowbray's convenient shadow and adherent, but who, if triumphant, confiding in his superiority of judgement upon so important a point, might either cut him altogether, or expect that, in future, the squire, who had long seemed the planet of their set, should be content to roll around himself, Sir Bingo, in the capacity of a satellite.

The squire, therefore, devoutly hoped that Tyrrel's restive disposition might continue, to prevent the decision of the bet, while, at the same time, he nourished a very reasonable degree of dislike to that stranger, who had been the indirect occasion of the unpleasant predicament in which he found himself, by not catching a salmon weighing a pound heavier. He, therefore, openly censured the meanness of those who proposed taking further notice of Tyrrel, and referred to the unanswered letters, as a piece of impertinence which announced him to be no gentleman.

But though appearances were against him, and though he was in truth naturally inclined to solitude, and averse to the affectation and bustle of such a society, that part of Tyrrel's behaviour which indicated ill-breeding was easily accounted for, by his never having received the letters which required an answer. Trotting Nelly, whether unwilling to face her gossip, Meg Dods, without bringing

back the drawing, or whether oblivious through the influence of the double dram with which she had been indulged at the Well, jumbled off with her cart to her beloved village of Scate-raw, from which she transmitted the letters by the first bare-legged gillie who travelled towards Aultoun of Saint Ronan's; so that at last, but after a long delay, they reached the Cleikum Inn and the hands of Mr. Tyrrel.

The arrival of these documents explained some part of the oddity of behaviour which had surprised him in his neighbours of the Well; and as he saw they had got somehow an idea of his being a lion extraordinary, and was sensible that such is a character equally ridiculous, and difficult to support, he hastened to write to Mr. Winterblossom a card in the style of ordinary mortals. In this he stated the delay occasioned by miscarriage of the letter, and his regret on that account; expressed his intention of dining with the company at the Well on the succeeding day, while he regretted that other circumstances, as well as the state of his health and spirits, would permit him this honour very unfrequently during his stay in the country, and begged no trouble might be taken about his accommodation at the Well, as he was perfectly satisfied with his present residence. A separate note to Sir Bingo said he was happy he could verify the weight of the fish, which he had noted in his diary ('D—n the fellow, does he keep a dairy?' said the baronet); and though the result could only be particularly agreeable to one party, he should wish both winner and loser mirth with their wine;—he was sorry he was unable to promise himself the pleasure of participating in either. Enclosed was a signed note of the weight of the fish. Armed with this, Sir Bingo claimed his wine—triumphed in his judgement—swore louder and more articulately than ever he was known to utter any previous sounds, that this Tyrrel was a devilish honest fellow, and he trusted to be better acquainted with him; while the crest-fallen squire, privately cursing the stranger by all his gods, had no mode of silencing his companion but by allowing his loss, and fixing a day for discussing the bet.

In the public rooms the company examined even microscopically the response of the stranger to Mr. Winterblossom, straining their ingenuity to discover, in the most

ordinary expressions, a deeper and esoteric meaning, expressive of something mysterious, and not meant to meet the eye. Mr. Meiklewham, the writer, dwelt on the word *circumstances*, which he read with peculiar emphasis.

'Ah, poor lad!' he concluded, 'I doubt he sits cheaper at Meg Dort's chimney-corner than he could do with the present company.'

Doctor Quackleben, in the manner of a clergyman selecting a word from his text, as that which is particularly insisted upon, repeated in an undertone, the words, '*State of health?*—umph—state of health? Nothing acute—no one has been sent for—must be chronic—tending to gout, perhaps. Or his shyness to society—light wild eye—irregular step—starting when met suddenly by a stranger, and turning abruptly and angrily away—Pray, Mr. Winterblossom, let me have an order to look over the file of newspapers—it's very troublesome that restriction about consulting them.'

'You know it is a necessary one, doctor,' said the president; 'because so few of the good company read anything else, that the old newspapers would have been worn to pieces long since.'

'Well, well, let me have the order,' said the doctor; 'I remember something of a gentleman run away from his friends—I must look at the description. I believe I have a strait-jacket somewhere about the dispensary.'

While this suggestion appalled the male part of the company, who did not much relish the approaching dinner in company with a gentleman whose situation seemed so precarious, some of the younger misses whispered to each other—'Ah, poor fellow!—and if it be as the doctor supposes, my lady, who knows what the cause of his illness may have been?—His *spirits* he complains of—ah, poor man!'

And thus, by the ingenious commentaries of the company at the Well, on as plain a note as ever covered the eighth part of a sheet of foolscap, the writer was deprived of his property, his reason, and his heart, 'all or either, or one or other of them,' as is briefly and distinctly expressed in the law phrase.

In short, so much was said *pro* and *con*, so many ideas

started and theories maintained, concerning the disposition and character of the Misanthrope, that, when the company assembled at the usual time, before proceeding to dinner, they doubted, as it seemed, whether the expected addition to their society was to enter the room on his hands or his feet ; and when ' Mr. Tyrrel ' was announced by Toby, at the top of his voice, the gentleman who entered the room had so very little to distinguish him from others, that there was a momentary disappointment. The ladies, in particular, began to doubt whether the compound of talent, misanthropy, madness, and mental sensibility, which they had pictured to themselves, actually was the same with the genteel, and even fashionable-looking man whom they saw before them ; who, though in a morning dress, which the distance of his residence, and the freedom of the place, made excusable, had, even in the minute points of his exterior, none of the negligence, or wildness, which might be supposed to attach to the vestments of a misanthropic recluse, whether sane or insane. As he paid his compliments round the circle, the scales seemed to fall from the eyes of those he spoke to ; and they saw with surprise, that the exaggerations had existed entirely in their own preconceptions, and that whatever the fortunes, or rank in life, of Mr. Tyrrel might be, his manners, without being showy, were gentlemanlike and pleasing. He returned his thanks to Mr. Winterblossom in a manner which made that gentleman recall his best breeding to answer the stranger's address in kind. He then escaped from the awkwardness of remaining the sole object of attention, by gliding gradually among the company,—not like an owl, which seeks to hide itself in a thicket, or an awkward and retired man, shrinking from the society into which he is compelled, but with the air of one who could maintain with ease his part in a higher circle. His address to Lady Penelope was adapted to the romantic tone of Mr. Chatterly's epistle, to which it was necessary to allude. He was afraid, he said, he must complain to Juno of the neglect of Iris, for her irregularity in delivery of a certain ethereal command, which he had not dared to answer otherwise than by mute obedience—unless, indeed, as the import of the letter seemed to infer, the invitation was designed for some

more gifted individual than he to whom chance had assigned it.

Lady Penelope by her lips, and many of the young ladies with their eyes, assured him there was no mistake in the matter; that he was really the gifted person whom the nymphs had summoned to their presence, and that they were well acquainted with his talents as a poet and a painter. Tyrrel disclaimed, with earnestness and gravity, the charge of poetry, and professed, that, far from attempting the art itself, he 'read with reluctance all but the productions of the very first-rate poets, and some of these—he was almost afraid to say—he should have liked better in humble prose.'

'You have now only to disown your skill as an artist,' said Lady Penelope, 'and we must consider Mr. Tyrrel as the falsest and most deceitful of his sex, who has a mind to deprive us of the opportunity of benefiting by the productions of his unparalleled endowments. I assure you I shall put my young friends on their guard. Such dissimulation cannot be without its object.'

'And I,' said Mr. Winterblossom, 'can produce a piece of real evidence against the culprit.'

So saying, he unrolled the sketch which he had filched from Trotting Nelly, and which he had pared and pasted (arts in which he was eminent), so as to take out its creases, repair its breaches, and vamp it as well as my old friend Mrs. Weir could have repaired the damages of time on a folio Shakespeare.

'The vara *corpus delicti*,' said the writer, grinning and rubbing his hands.

'If you are so good as to call such scratches drawings,' said Tyrrel, 'I must stand so far confessed. I used to do them for my own amusement; but since my landlady, Mrs. Dods, has of late discovered that I gain my livelihood by them, why should I disown it?'

This avowal, made without the least appearance either of shame or *retenue*, seemed to have a striking effect on the whole society. The president's trembling hand stole the sketch back to the portfolio, afraid doubtless it might be claimed in form, or else compensation expected by the artist. Lady Penelope was disconcerted, like an awkward

horse when it changes the leading foot in galloping. She had to recede from the respectful and easy footing on which he had contrived to place himself, to one which might express patronage on her own part, and dependence on Tyrrel's; and this could not be done in a moment.

The Man of Law murmured, 'Circumstances—circumstances—I thought so!'

Sir Bingo whispered to his friend the squire, 'Run out—blown up—off the course—pity—d—d pretty fellow he has been!'

'A raff from the beginning!' whispered Mowbray.—'I never thought him anything else.'

'I'll hold ye a pony of that, my dear, and I'll ask him.'

'Done, for a pony, provided you ask him in ten minutes,' said the squire; 'but you dare not, Bingie—he has a d—d cross game look, with all that civil chaff of his.'

'Done,' said Sir Bingo, but in a less confident tone than before, and with a determination to proceed with some caution in the matter.—'I have got a rouleau above, and Winterblossom shall hold stakes.'

'I have no rouleau,' said the squire; 'but I'll fly a cheque on Meiklewham.'

'See it be better than your last,' said Sir Bingo, 'for I won't be skylarked again.—Jack, my boy, you are had.'

'Not till the bet's won; and I shall see yon walking dandy break your head, Bingie, before that,' answered Mowbray. 'Best speak to the captain before hand—it is a hellish scrape you are running into—I'll let you off yet, Bingie, for a guinea forfeit. See, I am just going to start the tattler.'

'Start, and be d—d!' said Sir Bingo. 'You are gotten, I assure you o' that, Jack.' And with a bow and a shuffle, he went up and introduced himself to the stranger as Sir Bingo Binks.

'Had—honour—write—sir,' were the only sounds which his throat, or rather his cravat, seemed to send forth.

'Confound the booby!' thought Mowbray; 'he will get out of leading strings, if he goes on at this rate; and doubly confounded be this cursed tramper, who, the Lord knows why, has come hither from the Lord knows where, to drive the pigs through my game.'

In the meantime, while his friend stood with his stop-watch in his hand, with a visage lengthened under the influence of these reflections, Sir Bingo, with an instinctive tact, which self-preservation seemed to dictate to a brain neither the most delicate nor subtle in the world, premised his inquiry with some general remarks on fishing and field-sports. With all these he found Tyrrel more than passably acquainted. Of fishing and shooting, particularly, he spoke with something like enthusiasm ; so that Sir Bingo began to hold him in considerable respect, and to assure himself that he could not be, or at least could not originally have been bred, the itinerant artist which he now gave himself out—and this, with the fast lapse of the time, induced him thus to address Tyrrel.—'I say, Mr. Tyrrel—why, you have been one of us—I say '——

'If you mean a sportsman, Sir Bingo—I have been, and am a pretty keen one still,' replied Tyrrel.

'Why, then, you did not always do them sort of things ? '

'What sort of things do you mean, Sir Bingo ? ' said Tyrrel. 'I have not the pleasure of understanding you.'

'Why, I mean them sketches,' said Sir Bingo. 'I'll give you a handsome order for them, if you tell me. I will, on my honour.'

'Does it concern you particularly, Sir Bingo, to know anything of my affairs ? ' said Tyrrel.

'No—certainly—not immediately,' answered Sir Bingo, with some hesitation, for he liked not the dry tone in which Tyrrel's answers were returned half so well as a bumper of dry sherry ; 'only I said you were a d—d gnostic fellow, and I laid a bet you have not been always professional—that's all.'

Mr. Tyrrel replied, 'A bet with Mr. Mowbray, I suppose ?'

'Yes, with Jack,' replied the baronet—'you have hit it —I hope I have done him ? '

Tyrrel bent his brows, and looked first at Mr. Mowbray, then at the baronet, and, after a moment's thought, addressed the latter.—'Sir Bingo Binks, you are a gentleman of elegant inquiry and acute judgement.—You are perfectly right—I was *not* bred to the profession of an artist, nor did I practise it formerly, whatever I may do now ; and so that question is answered.'

'And Jack is diddled,' said the baronet, smiting his thigh in triumph, and turning towards the squire and the stake-holder, with a smile of exultation.

'Stop a single moment, Sir Bingo,' said Tyrrel; 'take one word with you. I have a great respect for bets—it is part of an Englishman's charter to bet on what he thinks fit, and to prosecute his inquiries over hedge and ditch, as if he were steeple-hunting. But as I have satisfied you on the subject of two bets, that is sufficient compliance with the custom of the country; and therefore I request, Sir Bingo, you will not make me or my affairs the subject of any more wagers.'

'I'll be d—d if I do,' was the internal resolution of Sir Bingo. Aloud he muttered some apologies, and was heartily glad that the dinner-bell, sounding at the moment, afforded him an apology for shuffling off in a different direction.

CHAPTER VI

TABLE-TALK

And, sir, if these accounts be true,
The Dutch have mighty things in view
The Austrians—I admire French Beans,
Dear ma'am, above all other greens.
. . . . . .
And all as lively and as brisk
As—Ma'am, d'ye choose a game at whisk?
Table-Talk.

When they were about to leave the room, Lady Penelope assumed Tyrrel's arm with a sweet smile of condescension, meant to make the honoured party understand in its full extent the favour conferred. But the unreasonable artist, far from intimating the least confusion at an attention so little to be expected, seemed to consider the distinction as one which was naturally paid to the greatest stranger present; and when he placed Lady Penelope at the head of the table, by Mr. Winterblossom the president, and took a chair to himself betwixt her ladyship and Lady Binks,

the provoking wretch appeared no more sensible of being exalted above his proper rank in society, than if he had been sitting at the bottom of the table by honest Mrs. Blower from the Bow-head, who had come to the Well to carry off the dregs of the *Inflienzie*, which she scorned to term a surfeit.

Now this indifference puzzled Lady Penelope's game extremely, and irritated her desire to get at the bottom of Tyrrel's mystery, if there was one, and secure him to her own party. If you were ever at a watering-place, reader, you know that while the guests do not always pay the most polite attention to unmarked individuals, the appearance of a stray lion makes an interest as strong as it is reasonable, and the Amazonian chiefs of each coterie, like the hunters of Buenos Ayres, prepare their lasso, and manœuvre to the best advantage they can, each hoping to noose the unsuspicious monster, and lead him captive to her own menagerie. A few words concerning Lady Penelope Penfeather will explain why she practised this sport with even more than common zeal.

She was the daughter of an earl, possessed a showy person, and features which might be called handsome in youth, though now rather too much *prononcés* to render the term proper. The nose was become sharper ; the cheeks had lost the roundness of youth ; and as, during fifteen years that she had reigned a beauty and a ruling toast, the right man had not spoken, or, at least, had not spoken at the right time, her ladyship, now rendered sufficiently independent by the inheritance of an old relation, spoke in praise of friendship, began to dislike the town in summer, and to ' babble of green fields.'

About the time that Lady Penelope thus changed the tenor of her life, she was fortunate enough, with Dr. Quackleben's assistance, to find out the virtues of Saint Ronan's spring ; and, having contributed her share to establish the *urbs in rure*, which had risen around it, she sat herself down as leader of the fashions in the little province which she had in a great measure both discovered and colonized. She was, therefore, justly desirous to compel homage and tribute from all who should approach the territory.

In other respects, Lady Penelope pretty much resembled

the numerous class she belonged to. She was at bottom a well-principled woman, but too thoughtless to let her principles control her humour, therefore not scrupulously nice in her society. She was good-natured, but capricious and whimsical, and willing enough to be kind or generous, if it neither thwarted her humour, nor cost her much trouble; would have chaperoned a young friend anywhere, and moved the world for subscription tickets; but never troubled herself how much her giddy charge flirted, or with whom; so that, with a numerous class of misses, her ladyship was the most delightful creature in the world. Then Lady Penelope had lived so much in society, knew so exactly when to speak, and how to escape from an embarrassing discussion by professing ignorance, while she looked intelligence, that she was not generally discovered to be a fool, unless when she set up for being remarkably clever. This happened more frequently of late, when perhaps, as she could not but observe that the repairs of the toilet became more necessary, she might suppose that new lights, according to the poet, were streaming on her mind through the chinks that Time was making. Many of her friends, however, thought that Lady Penelope would have better consulted her genius by remaining in mediocrity, as a fashionable and well-bred woman, than by parading her new-founded pretensions to taste and patronage; but such was not her own opinion, and doubtless, her ladyship was the best judge.

On the other side of Tyrrel sat Lady Binks, lately the beautiful Miss Bonnyrigg, who, during the last season, had made the company at the Well alternately admire, smile, and stare, by dancing the highest Highland fling, riding the wildest pony, laughing the loudest laugh at the broadest joke, and wearing the briefest petticoat of any nymph of Saint Ronan's. Few knew that this wild, hoydenish, half-mad humour, was only superinduced over her real character, for the purpose of—getting well married. She had fixed her eyes on Sir Bingo, and was aware of his maxim, that to catch him, 'a girl must be,' in his own phrase, 'bang up to everything;' and that he would choose a wife for the neck-or-nothing qualities which recommend a good hunter. She made out her catch-match, and she was miserable.

Her wild good humour was entirely an assumed part of her character, which was passionate, ambitious, and thoughtful. Delicacy she had none—she knew Sir Bingo was a brute and a fool, even while she was hunting him down; but she had so far mistaken her own feelings, as not to have expected that when she became bone of his bone, she should feel so much shame and anger when she saw his folly expose him to be laughed at and plundered, or so disgusted when his brutality became intimately connected with herself. It is true, he was on the whole rather an innocent monster; and between bitting and bridling, coaxing and humouring, might have been made to pad on well enough. But an unhappy boggling which had taken place previous to the declaration of their private marriage, had so exasperated her spirits against her helpmate, that modes of conciliation were the last she was likely to adopt. Not only had the assistance of the Scottish Themis, so propitiously indulgent to the foibles of the fair, been resorted to on the occasion, but even Mars seemed ready to enter upon the tapis, if Hymen had not intervened. There was, *de par le monde*, a certain brother of the lady—an officer—and, as it happened, on leave of absence,—who alighted from a hack-chaise at the Fox Hotel, at eleven o'clock at night, holding in his hand a slip of well-dried oak, accompanied by another gentleman, who, like himself, wore a military travelling-cap and a black stock; out of the said chaise, as was reported by the trusty Toby, was handed a small reise-sac, an Andrea Ferrara, and a neat mahogany box, eighteen inches long, three deep, and some six broad. Next morning a solemn *palaver* (as the natives of Madagascar call their national convention) was held at an unusual hour, at which Captain MacTurk and Mr. Mowbray assisted; and the upshot was, that at breakfast the company were made happy by the information, that Sir Bingo had been for some weeks the happy bridegroom of their general favourite; which union, concealed for family reasons, he was now at liberty to acknowledge and to fly with the wings of love to bring his sorrowing turtle from the shades to which she had retired, till the obstacles to their mutual happiness could be removed. Now, though all this sounded very smoothly, that gall-less turtle,

Lady Binks, could never think of the tenor of the proceedings without the deepest feelings of resentment and contempt for the principal actor, Sir Bingo.

Besides all these unpleasant circumstances, Sir Bingo's family had refused to countenance her wish that he should bring her to his own seat; and hence a new shock to her pride, and new matter of contempt against poor Sir Bingo, for being ashamed and afraid to face down the opposition of his kinsfolk, for whose displeasure, though never attending to any good advice from them, he retained a childish awe.

The manners of the young lady were no less changed than was her temper; and, from being much too careless and free, were become reserved, sullen, and haughty. A consciousness that many scrupled to hold intercourse with her in society, rendered her disagreeably tenacious of her rank, and jealous of everything that appeared like neglect. She had constituted herself mistress of Sir Bingo's purse; and, unrestrained in the expenses of dress and equipage, chose, contrary to her maiden practice, to be rather rich and splendid than gay, and to command that attention by magnificence, which she no longer deigned to solicit by rendering herself either agreeable or entertaining. One secret source of her misery was the necessity of showing deference to Lady Penelope Penfeather, whose understanding she despised, and whose pretensions to consequence, to patronage, and to literature, she had acuteness enough to see through, and to contemn; and this dislike was the more grievous, that she felt she depended a good deal on Lady Penelope's countenance for the situation she was able to maintain even among the not very select society of Saint Ronan's Well; and that, neglected by her, she must have dropped lower in the scale even there. Neither was Lady Penelope's kindness to Lady Binks extremely cordial. She partook in the ancient and ordinary dislike of single nymphs of a certain age, to those who make splendid alliances under their very eye—and she more than suspected the secret disaffection of the lady. But the name sounded well; and the style in which Lady Binks lived was a credit to the place. So they satisfied their mutual dislike with saying a few sharp things to each other occasionally, but all under the mask of civility.

Such was Lady Binks; and yet, being such, her dress, and her equipage, and carriages, were the envy of half the misses at the Well, who, while she sat disfiguring with sullenness her very lovely face (for it was as beautiful as her shape was exquisite), only thought she was proud of having carried her point, and felt herself, with her large fortune and diamond bandeau, no fit company for the rest of the party. They gave way, therefore, with meekness to her domineering temper, though it was not the less tyrannical that, in her maiden state of hoydenhood, she had been to some of them an object of slight and of censure; and Lady Binks had not forgotten the offences offered to Miss Bonnyrigg. But the fair sisterhood submitted to her retaliations, as lieutenants endure the bullying of a rude and boisterous captain of the sea, with the secret determination to pay it home to their underlings when they shall become captains themselves.

In this state of importance, yet of penance, Lady Binks occupied her place at the dinner-table, alternately disconcerted by some stupid speech of her lord and master, and by some slight sarcasm from Lady Penelope, to which she longed to reply, but dared not.

She looked from time to time at her neighbour, Frank Tyrrel, but without addressing him, and accepted in silence the usual civilities which he proffered to her. She had remarked keenly his interview with Sir Bingo, and knowing by experience the manner in which her honoured lord was wont to retreat from a dispute in which he was unsuccessful, as well as his genius for getting into such perplexities, she had little doubt that he had sustained from the stranger some new indignity; whom, therefore, she regarded with a mixture of feeling, scarce knowing whether to be pleased with him for having given pain to him whom she hated, or angry with him for having affronted one in whose degradation her own was necessarily involved. There might be other thoughts—on the whole, she regarded him with much though with mute attention. He paid her but little in return, being almost entirely occupied in replying to the questions of the engrossing Lady Penelope Penfeather.

Receiving polite though rather evasive answers to her inquiries concerning his late avocations, her ladyship could

only learn that Tyrrel had been travelling in several remote parts of Europe, and even of Asia. Baffled, but not repulsed, the lady continued her courtesy by pointing out to him, as a stranger, several individuals of the company to whom she proposed introducing him, as persons from whose society he might derive either profit or amusement. In the midst of this sort of conversation, however, she suddenly stopped short.

'Will you forgive me, Mr. Tyrrel,' she said, 'if I say I have been watching your thoughts for some moments, and that I have detected you? All the while I have been talking of these good folks, and that you have been making such civil replies, that they might be with great propriety and utility inserted in the 'Familiar Dialogues, teaching foreigners how to express themselves in English upon ordinary occasions'—your mind has been entirely fixed upon that empty chair, which hath remained there opposite betwixt our worthy president and Sir Bingo Binks.'

'I own, madam,' he answered, 'I was a little surprised at seeing such a distinguished seat unoccupied, while the table is rather crowded.'

'Oh confess more, sir! Confess that to a poet a seat unoccupied—the chair of Banquo—has more charms than if it were filled even as an alderman would fill it. What if "the Dark Ladye"[n] should glide in and occupy it? Would you have courage to stand the vision, Mr. Tyrrel?—I assure you the thing is not impossible.'

'*What* is not impossible, Lady Penelope?' said Tyrrel, somewhat surprised.

'Startled already?—Nay, then, I despair of your enduring the awful interview.'

'What interview? who is expected?' said Tyrrel, unable with the utmost exertion to suppress some signs of curiosity, though he suspected the whole to be merely some mystification of her ladyship.

'How delighted I am,' she said, 'that I have found out where you are vulnerable! Expected—did I say expected?—no, not expected.

> 'She glides, like Night, from land to land,
> She hath strange power of speech.

—But come, I have you at my mercy, and I will be generous

and explain. We call—that is, among ourselves, you understand—Miss Clara Mowbray, the sister of that gentleman that sits next to Miss Parker, the Dark Ladye, and that seat is left for her. For she was expected—no, not expected—I forget again!—but it was thought *possible* she might honour us to-day, when our feast was so full and piquant. Her brother is our lord of the manor—and so they pay her that sort of civility to regard her as a visitor—and neither Lady Binks nor I think of objecting. She is a singular young person, Clara Mowbray—she amuses me very much—I am always rather glad to see her.'

'She is not to come hither to-day,' said Tyrrel; 'am I so to understand your ladyship?'

'Why, it is past her time—even *her* time,' said Lady Penelope—'dinner was kept back half an hour, and our poor invalids were famishing, as you may see by the deeds they have done since. But Clara is an odd creature, and if she took it into her head to come hither at this moment, hither she would come—she is very whimsical. Many people think her handsome—but she looks so like something from another world, that she makes me always think of Mat Lewis's Spectre Lady.'

And she repeated with much cadence,

> 'There is a thing—there is a thing,
> I fain would have from thee;
> I fain would have that gay gold ring,
> O warrior, give it me!

And then you remember his answer:

> 'This ring Lord Brooke from his daughter took,
> And a solemn oath he swore,
> That that ladye my bride should be
> When this crusade was o'er.

'You do figures as well as landscapes, I suppose, Mr. Tyrrel? You shall make a sketch for me—a slight thing—for sketches, I think, show the freedom of art better than finished pieces—I dote on the first coruscations of genius—flashing like lightning from the cloud! You shall make a sketch for my own boudoir—my dear sulky den at Air Castle, and Clara Mowbray shall sit for the Ghost Ladye.'

That would be but a poor compliment to your ladyship's friend,' replied Tyrrel.

'Friend? We don't get quite that length, though I like Clara very well. Quite sentimental cast of face,—I think I saw an antique in the Louvre very like her (I was there in 1800)—quite an antique countenance—eyes something hollowed—care has dug caves for them, but they are caves of the most beautiful marble arched with jet—a straight nose, and absolutely the Grecian mouth and chin—a profusion of long straight black hair, with the whitest skin you ever saw—as white as the whitest parchment—and not a shade of colour in her cheek—none whatever—If she would be naughty, and borrow a prudent touch of complexion, she might be called beautiful. Even as it is, many think her so, although surely, Mr. Tyrrel, three colours are necessary to the female face. However, we used to call her the Melpomene of the Spring last season, as we called Lady Binks—who was not then Lady Binks—our Euphrosyne—Did we not, my dear?'

'Did we not what, madam?' said Lady Binks, in a tone something sharper than ought to have belonged to so beautiful a countenance.

'I am sorry I have started you out of your reverie, my love,' answered Lady Penelope, 'I was only assuring Mr. Tyrrel that you were once Euphrosyne, though now so much under the banners of Il Penseroso.'

'I do not know that I have been either one or the other,' answered Lady Binks; 'one thing I certainly am not—I am not capable of understanding your ladyship's wit and learning.'

'Poor soul,' whispered Lady Penelope to Tyrrel; 'we know what we are, we know not what we may be. And now, Mr. Tyrrel, I have been your sibyl to guide you through this Elysium of ours, I think, in reward, I deserve a little confidence in return.'

'If I had any to bestow which could be in the slightest degree interesting to your ladyship,' answered Tyrrel.

'Oh! cruel man—he will not understand me!' exclaimed the lady—'In plain words, then, a peep into your portfolio—just to see what objects you have rescued from natural decay, and rendered immortal by the pencil. You

do not know—indeed, Mr. Tyrrel, you do not know how I dote upon your "serenely silent art," second to poetry alone—equal—superior perhaps—to music.'

'I really have little that could possibly be worth the attention of such a judge as your ladyship,' answered Tyrrel; 'such trifles as your ladyship has seen I sometimes leave at the foot of the tree I have been sketching.'

'As Orlando left his verses in the Forest of Ardennes? Oh, the thoughtless prodigality! Mr. Winterblossom, do you hear this? We must follow Mr. Tyrrel in his walks, and glean what he leaves behind him.'

Her ladyship was here disconcerted by some laughter on Sir Bingo's side of the table, which she chastised by an angry glance, and then proceeded emphatically.

'Mr. Tyrrel—this must *not* be—this is not the way of the world, my good sir, to which even genius must stoop its flight. We must consult the engraver—though perhaps you etch as well as you draw?'

'I should suppose so,' said Mr. Winterblossom, edging in a word with difficulty, 'from the freedom of Mr. Tyrrel's touch.'

'I will not deny my having spoiled a little copper now and then,' said Tyrrel, 'since I am charged with the crime by such good judges; but it has only been by way of experiment.'

'Say no more,' said the lady; 'my darling wish is accomplished! We have long desired to have the remarkable and most romantic spots of our little Arcadia here—spots consecrated to friendship, the fine arts, the loves and the graces, immortalized by the graver's art, faithful to its charge of fame—you shall labour on this task, Mr. Tyrrel; we will all assist with notes and illustrations—we will all contribute—only some of us must be permitted to remain anonymous—Fairy favours, you know, Mr. Tyrrel, must be kept secret—And you shall be allowed the pillage of the Album—some sweet things there of Mr. Chatterly's—and Mr. Edgeit, a gentleman of your own profession, I am sure will lend his aid—Dr. Quackleben will contribute some scientific notices. And for subscription'——

'Financial—financial—your leddyship, I speak to order!'

said the writer, interrupting Lady Penelope with a tone of impudent familiarity, which was meant doubtless for jocular ease.

'How am I out of order, Mr. Meiklewham?' said her ladyship, drawing herself up.

'I speak to order!—No warrants for money can be extracted before intimation to the committee of management.'

'Pray who mentioned money, Mr. Meiklewham?' said her ladyship.—'That wretched old pettifogger,' she added in a whisper to Tyrrel, 'thinks of nothing else but the filthy pelf.'

'Ye spake of subscription, my leddy, whilk is the same thing as money, differing only in respect of time—the subscription being a contract *de futuro*, and having a *tractus temporis in gremio*—And I have kend mony honest folks in the company at the Well complain of the subscriptions as a great abuse, as obliging them either to look unlike other folk, or to gie good lawful coin for ballants and picture-books, and things they caredna a pinch of snuff for.'

Several of the company, at the lower end of the table, assented both by nods and murmurs of approbation; and the orator was about to proceed, when Tyrrel with difficulty procured a hearing before the debate went further, and assured the company that her ladyship's goodness had led her into an error; that he had no work in hand worthy of their patronage, and, with the deepest gratitude for Lady Penelope's goodness, had it not in his power to comply with her request. There was some tittering at her ladyship's expense, who, as the writer slyly observed, had been something *ultroneous* in her patronage. Without attempting for the moment any rally (as indeed the time which had passed since the removal of the dinner scarce permitted an opportunity), Lady Penelope gave the signal for the ladies' retreat, and left the gentlemen to the circulation of the bottle.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEA-TABLE

—— While the cups,
Which cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each.
COWPER.

IT was common at the Well for the fair guests occasionally to give tea to the company,—such at least as, from their rank and leading in the little society, might be esteemed fit to constitute themselves patronesses of an evening; and the same lady generally carried the authority she had acquired into the ballroom, where two fiddles and a bass, at a guinea a night, with a *quantum sufficit* of tallow-candles (against the use of which Lady Penelope often mutinied), enabled the company—to use the appropriate phrase—'to close the evening on the light fantastic toe.'

On the present occasion, the lion of the hour, Mr. Francis Tyrrel, had so little answered the high-wrought expectations of Lady Penelope, that she rather regretted having ever given herself any trouble about him, and particularly that of having manœuvred herself into the patronage of the tea-table for the evening, to the great expenditure of souchong and congo. Accordingly, her ladyship had no sooner summoned her own woman, and her *fille de chambre*, to make tea, with her page, footman, and postilion to hand it about (in which duty they were assisted by two richly-laced and thickly-powdered footmen of Lady Binks's, whose liveries put to shame the more modest garb of Lady Penelope's, and even dimmed the glory of the suppressed coronet upon the buttons), than she began to vilipend and depreciate what had been so long the object of her curiosity.

'This Mr. Tyrrel,' she said, in a tone of authoritative decision, 'seems after all a very ordinary sort of person—quite a commonplace man, who, she dared say, had considered his condition, in going to the old ale-house, much better than they had done for him, when they asked him

to the Public Rooms. He had known his own place better than they did—there was nothing uncommon in his appearance or conversation—nothing at all *frappant*—she scarce believed he could even draw that sketch. Mr. Winterblossom, indeed, made a great deal of it; but then all the world knew that every scrap of engraving or drawing, which Mr. Winterblossom contrived to make his own, was, the instant it came into his collection, the finest thing that ever was seen—that was the way with collectors—their geese were all swans.'

'And your ladyship's swan has proved but a goose, my dearest Lady Pen,' said Lady Binks.

'*My* swan, dearest Lady Binks! I really do not know how I have deserved the appropriation.'

'Do not be angry, my dear Lady Penelope; I only mean, that for a fortnight and more you have spoke constantly *of* this Mr. Tyrrel, and all dinner-time you spoke *to* him.'

The fair company began to collect around, at hearing the word *dear* so often repeated in the same brief dialogue, which induced them to expect sport, and, like the vulgar on a similar occasion, to form a ring for the expected combatants.

'He sat betwixt us, Lady Binks,' answered Lady Penelope, with dignity. 'You had your usual headache, you know, and, for the credit of the company, I spoke for one.'

'For *two*, if your ladyship pleases,' replied Lady Binks. 'I mean,' she added, softening the expression, 'for yourself and me.'

'I am sorry,' said Lady Penelope, 'I should have spoken for one who can speak so smartly for herself, as my dear Lady Binks—I did not, by any means, desire to engross the conversation—I repeat it, there is a mistake about this man.'

'I think there is,' said Lady Binks, in a tone which implied something more than mere assent to Lady Penelope's proposition.

'I doubt if he is an artist at all,' said the Lady Penelope; 'or if he is, he must be doing things for some Magazine, or Encyclopaedia, or some such matter.'

'*I* doubt, too, if he be a professional artist,' said Lady

Binks. 'If so, he is of the very highest class, for I have seldom seen a better-bred man.'

'There are very well-bred artists,' said Lady Penelope. 'It is the profession of a gentleman.'

'Certainly,' answered Lady Binks; 'but the poorer class have often to struggle with poverty and dependence. In general society, they are like commercial people in presence of their customers; and that is a difficult part to sustain. And so you see them of all sorts—shy and reserved, when they are conscious of merit—petulant and whimsical, by way of showing their independence—intrusive, in order to appear easy—and sometimes obsequious and fawning, when they chance to be of a mean spirit. But you seldom see them quite at their ease, and therefore I hold this Mr. Tyrrel to be either an artist of the first class, raised completely above the necessity and degradation of patronage, or else to be no professional artist at all.'

Lady Penelope looked at Lady Binks with much such a regard as Balaam may have cast upon his ass, when he discovered the animal's capacity for holding an argument with him. She muttered to herself—

'*Mon âne parle, et même il parle bien!*'

But, declining the altercation which Lady Binks seemed disposed to enter into, she replied with good humour, 'Well, dearest Rachel, we will not pull caps about this man—nay, I think your good opinion of him gives him new value in my eyes. That is always the way with us, my good friend! We may confess it, when there are none of these conceited male wretches among us. We will know what he really is—he shall not wear fern-seed, and walk among us invisible thus—what say you, Maria?'

'Indeed, I say, dear Lady Penelope,' answered Miss Digges, whose ready chatter we have already introduced to the reader, 'he is a very handsome man, though his nose is too big, and his mouth too wide—but his teeth are like pearl—and he has such eyes!—especially when your ladyship spoke to him. I don't think you looked at his eyes—they are quite deep and dark, and full of glow, like what you read to us in the letter from that lady about Robert Burns.'

'Upon my word, miss, you come on finely,' said Lady Penelope. 'One had need take care what they read or talk about before you, I see.—Come, Jones, have mercy upon us—put an end to that symphony of tinkling cups and saucers, and let the first act of the tea-table begin, if you please.'

'Does her leddyship mean the grace?' said honest Mrs. Blower, for the first time admitted into this worshipful society, and busily employed in arranging an Indian handkerchief, that might have made a mainsail for one of her husband's smuggling luggers, which she spread carefully on her knee, to prevent damage to a flowered black silk gown from the repast of tea and cake, to which she proposed to do due honour,—'Does her leddyship mean the grace? I see the minister is just coming in.—Her leddyship waits till ye say a blessing, an ye please, sir.'

Mr. Winterblossom, who *toddled* after the chaplain, his toe having given him an alert hint to quit the dining-table, though he saw every feature in the poor woman's face swollen with desire to procure information concerning the ways and customs of the place, passed on the other side of the way, regardless of her agony of curiosity.

A moment after, she was relieved by the entrance of Dr. Quackleben, whose maxim being, that one patient was as well worth attention as another, and who knew by experience that the *honoraria* of a godly wife of the Bow-head were as apt to be forthcoming (if not more so) as my Lady Penelope's, he e'en sat himself quietly down by Mrs. Blower, and proceeded with the utmost kindness to inquire after her health, and to hope she had not forgotten taking a table-spoonful of spirits burnt to a *residuum*, in order to qualify the crudities.

'Indeed, doctor,' said the honest woman, 'I loot the brandy burn as lang as I dought look at the gude creature wasting its sell that gate—and then, when I was fain to put it out for very thrift, I did take a thimbleful of it (although it is not the thing I am used to, Dr. Quackleben), and I winna say but that it did me good.'

'Unquestionably, madam,' said the doctor. 'I am no friend to the use of alcohol in general, but there are particular cases—there are particular cases, Mrs. Blower—My

venerated instructor, one of the greatest men in our profession that ever lived, took a wine-glassful of old rum, mixed with sugar, every day after his dinner.'

'Aye? dear heart, he would be a comfortable doctor that,' said Mrs. Blower. 'He wad maybe ken something of my case. Is he living, think ye, sir?'

'Dead for many years, madam,' said Dr. Quackleben; 'and there are but few of his pupils that can fill his place, I assure ye. If I could be thought an exception, it is only because I was a favourite. Ah! blessings on the old red cloak of him! It covered more of the healing science than the gowns of a whole modern university.'

'There is ane, sir,' said Mrs. Blower, 'that has been muckle recommended about Edinburgh—Macgregor, I think they ca' him—folk come far and near to see him.'[1]

'I know who you mean, ma'am—a clever man—no denying it—a clever man—but there are certain cases—yours, for example—and I think that of many that come to drink this water—which I cannot say I think he perfectly understands—hasty—very hasty and rapid. Now I—I give the disease its own way at first—then watch it, Mrs. Blower—watch the turn of the tide.'

'Aye, troth, that 's true,' responded the widow; 'John Blower was ay watching turn of tide, puir man.'

'Then he is a starving doctor, Mrs. Blower—reduces diseases as soldiers do towns—by famine, not considering that the friendly inhabitants suffer as much as the hostile garrison—ahem!'

Here he gave an important and emphatic cough, and then proceeded.

'I am no friend either to excess or to violent stimulus, Mrs. Blower—but nature must be supported—a generous diet—cordials judiciously thrown in—not without the advice of a medical man—that is my opinion, Mrs. Blower, to speak as a friend—others may starve their patients if they have a mind.'

'It wadna do for me, the starving, Dr. Keekerben,' said the alarmed relict,—'it wadna do for me at a'—Just

[1] The late Dr. Gregory is probably intimated, as one of the celebrated Dr. Cullen's personal habits is previously mentioned. Dr. Gregory was distinguished for putting his patients on a severe regimen.

a' I can do to wear through the day with the sma' supports that nature requires—not a soul to look after me, doctor, since John Blower was ta'en awa.—Thank ye kindly, sir' (to the servant who handed the tea),—'thank ye, my bonny man' (to the page who served the cake)—'Now, dinna ye think, doctor' (in a low and confidential voice), 'that her leddyship's tea is rather of the weakliest—water bewitched, I think—and Mrs. Jones, as they ca' her, has cut the seed-cake very thin?'

'It is the fashion, Mrs. Blower,' answered Dr. Quackleben; 'and her ladyship's tea is excellent. But your taste is a little chilled, which is not uncommon at the first use of the waters, so that you are not sensible of the flavour—we must support the system—we reinforce the digestive powers—give me leave—you are a stranger, Mrs. Blower, and we must take care of you—I have an elixir which will put that matter to rights in a moment.'

So saying, Dr. Quackleben pulled from his pocket a small portable case of medicines—'Catch me without my tools'—he said; 'here I have the real useful pharmacopoeia—the rest is all humbug and hard names—this little case, with a fortnight or month, spring and fall, at Saint Ronan's Well, and no one will die till his day come.'

Thus boasting, the doctor drew from his case a large vial or small flask, full of a high-coloured liquid, of which he mixed three tea-spoonfuls in Mrs. Blower's cup, who, immediately afterwards, allowed that the flavour was improved beyond all belief, and that it was 'vera comfortable and restorative indeed'.

'Will it not do good to my complaints, doctor?' said Mr. Winterblossom, who had strolled towards them, and held out his cup to the physician.

'I by no means recommend it, Mr. Winterblossom,' said Dr. Quackleben, shutting up his case with great coolness; 'your case is oedematous, and you treat it your own way—you are as good a physician as I am, and I never interfere with another practitioner's patient.'

'Well, doctor,' said Winterblossom, 'I must wait till Sir Bingo comes in—he has a hunting-flask usually about him, which contains as good medicine as yours to the full.'

'You will wait for Sir Bingo some time,' said the doctor, 'he is a gentleman of sedentary habits—he has ordered another magnum.'

'Sir Bingo is an unco name for a man o' quality, dinna ye think sae, Dr. Cocklehen?' said Mrs. Blower. 'John Blower, when he was a wee bit in the wind's eye, as he ca'd it, puir fallow—used to sing a sang about a dog they ca'd Bingo, that suld hae belanged to a farmer.'

'Our Bingo is but a puppy yet, madam—or if a dog, he is a sad dog,' said Mr. Winterblossom, applauding his own wit by one of his own inimitable smiles.

'Or a mad dog, rather,' said Mr. Chatterly, 'for he drinks no water;' and he also smiled gracefully at the thoughts of having trumped, as it were, the president's pun.

'Twa pleasant men, doctor,' said the widow, 'and so is Sir Bungy too, for that matter; but oh! is nae it a pity he should bide sae lang by the bottle? It was puir John Blower's faut too, that weary tippling; when he wan to the lee-side of a bowl of punch, there was nae raising him. But they are taking awa the things, and, doctor, is it not an awfu' thing that the creature-comforts should hae been used without grace or thanksgiving?—that Mr. Chitterling, if he really be a minister, has muckle to answer for that he neglects his Master's service.'

'Why, madam,' said the doctor, 'Mr. Chatterly is scarce arrived at the rank of a minister plenipotentiary.'

'A minister potentiary—ah, doctor, I doubt that is some jest of yours,' said the widow; 'that 's sae like puir John Blower. When I wad hae had him gie up the *Lovely Peggy*, ship and cargo (the vessel was named after me, Doctor Kittleben), to be remembered in the prayers o' the congregation, he wad say to me, "They may pray that stand the risk, Peggy Bryce, for I've made insurance." He was a merry man, doctor; but he had the root of the matter in him, for a' his light way of speaking, as deep as ony skipper that ever loosed anchor from Leith Roads. I hae been a forsaken creature since his death—Oh the weary days and nights that I have had!—and the weight on the spirits—the spirits, doctor!—though I canna say I hae been easier since I hae been at the Wall than even now—if I kend what I was awing ye for elickstir, doctor,

for it 's done me muckle heart's good, forby the opening of my mind to you ? '

' Fie, fie, ma'am,' said the doctor, as the widow pulled out a sealskin pouch, such as sailors carry tobacco in, but apparently well stuffed with bank-notes,—' Fie, fie, madam—I am no apothecary—I have my diploma from Leyden—a regular physician, madam,—the elixir is heartily at your service ; and should you want any advice, no man will be prouder to assist you than your humble servant.'

' I am sure I am muckle obliged to your kindness, Dr. Kickalpin,' said the widow, folding up her pouch ; ' this was puir John Blower's spleuchan,[1] as they ca' it—I e'en wear it for his sake. He was a kind man, and left me comfortable in warld's gudes ; but comforts hae their cumbers,—to be a lone woman is a sair weird, Dr. Kittlepin.'

Dr. Quackleben drew his chair a little nearer that of the widow, and entered into a closer communication with her, in a tone doubtless of more delicate consolation than was fit for the ears of the company at large.

One of the chief delights of a watering-place is that every one's affairs seem to be put under the special surveillance of the whole company, so that, in all probability, the various flirtations, liaisons, and so forth, which naturally take place in the society, are not only the subject of amusement to the parties engaged, but also to the lookers on ; that is to say, generally speaking, to the whole community, of which for the time the said parties are members. Lady Penelope, the presiding goddess of the region, watchful over all her circle, was not long of observing that the doctor seemed to be suddenly engaged in close communication with the widow, and that he had even ventured to take hold of her fair plump hand, with a manner which partook at once of the gallant suitor and of the medical adviser.

' For the love of Heaven,' said her ladyship, ' who can that comely dame be, on whom our excellent and learned doctor looks with such uncommon regard ? '

' Fat, fair, and forty,' said Mr. Winterblossom ; ' that is all I know of her—a mercantile person.'

[1] A fur pouch for keeping tobacco.

'A carrack, Sir President,' said the chaplain, 'richly laden with colonial produce, by name the *Lovely Peggy Bryce*—no master—the late John Blower of North Leith having pushed off his boat for the Stygian Creek, and left the vessel without a hand on board.'

'The doctor,' said Lady Penelope, turning her glass towards them, 'seems willing to play the part of pilot.'

'I dare say he will be willing to change her name and register,' said Mr. Chatterly.

'He can be no less in common requital,' said Winterblossom. 'She has changed *his* name six times in the five minutes that I stood within hearing of them.'

'What do you think of the matter, my dear Lady Binks?' said Lady Penelope.

'Madam?' said Lady Binks, starting from a reverie, and answering as one who either had not heard, or did not understand the question.

'I mean, what think you of what is going on yonder?'

Lady Binks turned her glass in the direction of Lady Penelope's glance, fixed the widow and the doctor with one bold fashionable stare, and then, dropping her hand slowly, said with indifference, 'I really see nothing there worth thinking about.'

'I dare say it is a fine thing to be married,' said Lady Penelope; 'one's thoughts, I suppose, are so much engrossed with one's own perfect happiness, that they have neither time nor inclination to laugh like other folks. Miss Rachel Bonnyrigg would have laughed till her eyes ran over, had she seen what Lady Binks cares so little about—I dare say it must be an all-sufficient happiness to be married.'

'He would be a happy man that could convince your ladyship of that in good earnest,' said Mr. Winterblossom.

'Oh, who knows—the whim may strike me,' replied the lady; 'but no—no—no;— and that is three times.'

'Say it sixteen times more,' said the gallant president, 'and let nineteen nay-says be a grant.'

'If I should say a thousand Noes, there exists not the alchemy in living man that could extract one Yes out of the whole mass,' said her ladyship. 'Blessed be the

memory of Queen Bess!—She set us all an example to keep power when we have it—What noise is that?'

'Only the usual after-dinner quarrel,' said the divine. 'I hear the captain's voice, else most silent, commanding them to keep peace, in the devil's name and that of the ladies.'

'Upon my word, dearest Lady Binks, this is too bad of that lord and master of yours, and of Mowbray, who might have more sense, and of the rest of that claret-drinking set, to be quarrelling and alarming our nerves every evening with presenting their pistols perpetually at each other, like sportsmen confined to the house upon a rainy 12th of August. I am tired of the Peace-maker—he but skins the business over in one case to have it break out elsewhere. What think you, love, if we were to give out in orders, that the next quarrel which may arise, shall be bona fide fought to an end? We will all go out and see it, and wear the colours on each side; and if there should a funeral come of it, we will attend it in a body. Weeds are so becoming! Are they not, my dear Lady Binks? Look at Widow Blower in her deep black—don't you envy her, my love?'

Lady Binks seemed about to make a sharp and hasty answer, but checked herself, perhaps under the recollection that she could not prudently come to an open breach with Lady Penelope. At the same moment a door opened, and a lady dressed in a riding-habit, and wearing a black veil over her hat, appeared at the entry of the apartment.

'Angels and ministers of grace!' exclaimed Lady Penelope, with her very best tragic start—'My dearest Clara, why so late? and why thus? Will you step to my dressing-room—Jones will get you one of my gowns—we are just of a size, you know—do, pray—let me be vain of something of my own for once, by seeing you wear it.'

This was spoken in the tone of the fondest female friendship, and at the same time the fair hostess bestowed on Miss Mowbray one of those tender caresses, which ladies—God bless them!—sometimes bestow on each other with unnecessary prodigality, to the great discontent and envy of the male spectators.

'You are fluttered, my dearest Clara—you are feverish—

I am sure you are,' continued the sweetly anxious Lady Penelope; 'let me persuade you to lie down.'

'Indeed you are mistaken, Lady Penelope,' said Miss Mowbray, who seemed to receive much as a matter of course her ladyship's profusion of affectionate politeness :—'I am heated, and my pony trotted hard, that is the whole mystery.—Let me have a cup of tea, Mrs. Jones, and the matter is ended.'

'Fresh tea, Jones, directly,' said Lady Penelope, and led her passive friend to her own corner, as she was pleased to call the recess, in which she held her little court—ladies and gentlemen curtsying and bowing as she passed; to which civilities the new guest made no more return than the most ordinary politeness rendered unavoidable.

Lady Binks did not rise to receive her, but sat upright in her chair, and bent her head very stiffly; a courtesy which Miss Mowbray returned in the same stately manner, without further greeting on either side.

'Now, wha can that be, doctor?' said the Widow Blower—'mind ye have promised to tell me all about the grand folk—wha can that be that Leddy Penelope hauds such a racket wi' ?—and what for does she come wi' a habit and a beaver-hat, when we are a'' (a glance at her own gown) 'in our silks and satins?'

'To tell you who she is, my dear Mrs. Blower, is very easy,' said the officious doctor. 'She is Miss Clara Mowbray, sister to the lord of the manor—the gentleman who wears the green coat, with an arrow on the cape. To tell why she wears that habit, or does anything else, would be rather beyond doctor's skill. Truth is, I have always thought she was a little—a very little—touched—call it nerves—hypochondria—or what you will.'

'Lord help us, puir thing!' said the compassionate widow.—'And troth it looks like it. But it's a shame to let her go loose, doctor—she might hurt hersell, or somebody. See, she has 'ta'en the knife! Oh, it's only to cut a shave of the diet-loaf. She winna let the powder-monkey of a boy help her. There 's judgement in that though, doctor, for she can cut thick or thin as she likes. Dear me! she has not taken mair than a crumb, that ane would pit between the wires of a canary-bird's cage, after all.

I wish she would lift up that lang veil, or put aff that riding skirt, doctor. She should really be showed the regulations, Doctor Kickelshin.'

'She cares about no rules we can make, Mrs. Blower,' said the doctor; 'and her brother's will and pleasure, and Lady Penelope's whim of indulging her, carry her through in everything. They should take advice on her case.'

'Aye, truly, it 's time to take advice, when young creatures like her caper in amang dressed leddies, just as if they were come from scampering on Leith sands. Such a wark as my leddy makes wi' her, doctor! Ye would think they were baith fools of a feather.'

'They might have flown on one wing, for what I know,' said Dr. Quackleben; 'but there was early and sound advice taken in Lady Penelope's case. My friend, the late Earl of Featherhead, was a man of judgement—did little in his family but by rule of medicine—so that, what with the waters, and what with my own care, Lady Penelope is only freakish—fanciful—that's all—and her quality bears it out—the peccant principle might have broken out under other treatment.'

'Aye—she has been weel-friended,' said the widow; 'but this bairn Mowbray, puir thing! how came she to be sae left to hersell?'

'Her mother was dead—her father thought of nothing but his sports,' said the doctor. 'Her brother was educated in England, and cared for nobody but himself, if he had been here. What education she got was at her own hand—what reading she read was in a library full of old romances—what friends or company she had was what chance sent her—then no family-physician, not even a good surgeon within ten miles! And so you cannot wonder if the poor thing became unsettled.'

'Puir thing!—no doctor!—nor even a surgeon! But, doctor,' said the widow, 'maybe the puir thing had the enjoyment of her health, ye ken, and then'——

'Ah! ha, ha!—why *then*, madam, she needed a physician far more than if she had been delicate. A skilful physician, Mrs. Blower, knows how to bring down that robust health, which is a very alarming state of the frame when it is

considered *secundum artem*. Most sudden deaths happen when people are in a robust state of health. Ah! that state of perfect health is what the doctor dreads most on behalf of his patient.'

'Aye, aye, doctor!—I am quite sensible, nae doubt,' said the widow, 'of the great advantage of having a skeelfu' person about ane.'

Here the doctor's voice, in his earnestness to convince Mrs. Blower of the danger of supposing herself capable of living and breathing without a medical man's permission, sank into a soft pleading tone, of which our reporter could not catch the sound. He was, as great orators will sometimes be, 'inaudible in the gallery.'

Meanwhile, Lady Penelope overwhelmed Clara Mowbray with her caresses. In what degree her ladyship, at her heart, loved this young person, might be difficult to ascertain,—probably in the degree in which a child loves a favourite toy. But Clara was a toy not always to be come by—as whimsical in her way as her ladyship in her own, only that poor Clara's singularities were real, and her ladyship's chiefly affected. Without adopting the harshness of the doctor's conclusions concerning the former, she was certainly unequal in her spirits; and her occasional fits of levity were chequered by very long intervals of sadness. Her levity also appeared, in the world's eye, greater than it really was; for she had never been under the restraint of society which was really good, and entertained an undue contempt for that which she sometimes mingled with; having unhappily none to teach her the important truth, that some forms and restraints are to be observed, less in respect to others than to ourselves. Her dress, her manners, and her ideas, were therefore very much her own; and though they became her wonderfully, yet like Ophelia's garlands and wild snatches of melody, they were calculated to excite compassion and melancholy, even while they amused the observer.

'And why came you not to dinner? We expected you—your throne was prepared.'

'I had scarce come to tea,' said Miss Mowbray, 'of my own free will. But my brother says your ladyship proposes to come to Shaws Castle, and he insisted it was quite right

and necessary, to confirm you in so flattering a purpose, that I should come and say, Pray do, Lady Penelope; and so now here am I to say, Pray, do come.'

'Is an invitation so flattering limited to me alone, my dear Clara? Lady Binks will be jealous.'

'Bring Lady Binks, if she has the condescension to honour us'—(a bow was very stiffly exchanged between the ladies)—'bring Mr. Springblossom—Winterblossom—and all the lions and lionesses—we have room for the whole collection. My brother, I suppose, will bring his own particular regiment of bears, which, with the usual assortment of monkeys seen in all caravans, will complete the menagerie. How you are to be entertained at Shaws Castle, is, I thank Heaven, not my business, but John's.'

'We shall want no formal entertainment, my love,' said Lady Penelope; 'a *déjeûner à la fourchette*—we know, Clara, you would die of doing the honours of a formal dinner.'

'Not a bit; I should live long enough to make my will, and bequeath all large parties to Old Nick, who invented them.'

'Miss Mowbray,' said Lady Binks, who had been thwarted by this free-spoken young lady, both in her former character of a coquette and romp, and in that of a prude which she at present wore—'Miss Mowbray declares for

'Champagne and a chicken at last.'

'The chicken, without the champagne, if you please,' said Miss Mowbray; 'I have known ladies pay dear to have champagne on the board. By the by, Lady Penelope, you have not your collection in the same order and discipline as Pidcock and Polito. There was much growling and snarling in the lower den when I passed it.'

'It was feeding-time, my love,' said Lady Penelope; 'and the lower animals of every class become pugnacious at that hour—you see all our safer and well-conditioned animals are loose, and in good order.'

'Oh, yes—in the keeper's presence, you know.—Well, I must venture to cross the hall again among all that growling and grumbling—I would I had the fairy prince's quarters of mutton to toss among them if they should break out—

He, I mean, who fetched water from the Fountain of Lions. However, on second thoughts, I will take the back way, and avoid them. What says honest Bottom ?—

> 'For if they should as lions come in strife
> Into such place, 'twere pity of their life.'

'Shall I go with you, my dear ?' said Lady Penelope.

'No—I have too great a soul for that—I think some of them are lions only as far as the hide is concerned.'

'But why would you go so soon, Clara ?'

'Because my errand is finished—have I not invited you and yours ? and would not Lord Chesterfield himself allow I have done the polite thing ?'

'But you have spoken to none of the company—how can you be so odd, my love ?' said her ladyship.

'Why, I spoke to them all when I spoke to you and Lady Binks—but I am a good girl, and will do as I am bid.'

So saying, she looked round the company, and addressed each of them with an affectation of interest and politeness, which thinly concealed scorn and contempt.

'Mr. Winterblossom, I hope the gout is better—Mr. Robert Rymar (I have escaped calling him Thomas for once) —I hope the public give encouragement to the muses—Mr. Keelavine, I trust your pencil is busy—Mr. Chatterly, I have no doubt your flock improves—Dr. Quackleben, I am sure your patients recover. These are all the especials of the worthy company I know—for the rest, health to the sick, and pleasure to the healthy.'

'You are not going in reality, my love ?' said Lady Penelope; 'these hasty rides agitate your nerves—they do, indeed—you should be cautious—Shall I speak to Quackleben ?'

'To neither quack nor quackle, on my account, my dear lady. It is not as you would seem to say, by your winking at Lady Binks—it is not, indeed—I shall be no Lady Clementina, to be the wonder and pity of the spring of Saint Ronan's—No Ophelia neither—though I will say with her, Good-night, ladies—Good-night, sweet ladies !—and now—not my coach, my coach—but my horse, my horse !'

So saying, she tripped out of the room by a side passage,

leaving the ladies looking at each other significantly, an shaking their heads with an expression of much import.

'Something has ruffled the poor unhappy girl,' said Lad Penelope; 'I never saw her so very odd before.'

'Were I to speak my mind,' said Lady Binks, 'I think, Mrs. Highmore says in the farce, her madness is but a poo excuse for her impertinence.'

'Oh fie! my sweet Lady Binks,' said Lady Penelop 'spare my poor favourite! You, surely, of all other should forgive the excesses of an amiable eccentricity temper. Forgive me, my love, but I must defend an absen friend—My Lady Binks, I am very sure, is too generous an candid to

'Hate for arts which caused herself to rise.'

'Not being conscious of any high elevation, my lady answered Lady Binks, 'I do not know any arts I have bee under the necessity of practising to attain it. I suppos a Scotch lady of an ancient family may become the wife an English baronet, and no very extraordinary great caus to wonder at it.'

'No surely—but people in this world will, you know wonder at nothing,' answered Lady Penelope.

'If you envy me my poor quiz, Sir Bingo, I'll get yo a better, Lady Pen.'

'I don't doubt your talents, my dear; but when I wan one, I will get one for myself. But here comes the whol party of quizzes.—Joliffe, offer the gentlemen tea—then ge the floor ready for the dancers, and set the card-tables i the next room.'

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER DINNER

They draw the cork, they broach the barrel,
And first they kiss, and then they quarrel.—Prior.

If the reader has attended much to the manners of th canine race, he may have remarked the very differen manner in which the individuals of the different sexe carry on their quarrels among each other. The female

are testy, petulant, and very apt to indulge their impatient dislike of each other's presence, or the spirit of rivalry which it produces, in a sudden bark and snap, which last is generally made as much at advantage as possible. But these ebullitions of peevishness lead to no very serious or prosecuted conflict; the affair begins and ends in a moment. Not so the ire of the male dogs, which, once produced, and excited by growls of mutual offence and defiance, leads generally to a fierce and obstinate contest; in which, if the parties be dogs of game, and well matched, they grapple, throttle, roll each other in the kennel, and can only be separated by choking them with their own collars, till they lose wind and hold at the same time, or by surprising them out of their wrath by sousing them with cold water.

The simile, though a currish one, will hold good in its application to the human race. While the ladies in the tea-room of the Fox Hotel were engaged in the light snappish velitation, or skirmish, which we have described, the gentlemen who remained in the parlour were more than once like to have quarrelled more seriously.

We have mentioned the weighty reasons which induced Mr. Mowbray to look upon the stranger, whom a general invitation had brought into their society, with unfavourable prepossessions; and these were far from being abated by the demeanour of Tyrrel, which, though perfectly well-bred, indicated a sense of equality, which the young Laird of Saint Ronan's considered as extremely presumptuous.

As for Sir Bingo, he already began to nourish the genuine hatred always entertained by a mean spirit against an antagonist before whom it is conscious of having made a dishonourable retreat. He forgot not the manner, look, and tone, with which Tyrrel had checked his unauthorized intrusion; and though he had sunk beneath it at the moment, the recollection rankled in his heart as an affront to be avenged. As he drank his wine, courage, the want of which was, in his more sober moments, a check upon his bad temper, began to inflame his malignity, and he ventured upon several occasions to show his spleen, by contradicting Tyrrel more flatly than good manners permitted upon so short an acquaintance, and without any provocation. Tyrrel saw his ill humour, and despised it as

that of an overgrown schoolboy, whom it was not worth his while to answer according to his folly.

One of the apparent causes of the baronet's rudeness was indeed childish enough. The company were talking of shooting, the most animating topic of conversation among Scottish country gentlemen of the younger class, and Tyrrel had mentioned something of a favourite setter, an uncommonly handsome dog, from which he had been for some time separated, but which he expected would rejoin him in the course of next week.

'A setter!' retorted Sir Bingo, with a sneer; 'a pointer, I suppose you mean!'

'No, sir,' said Tyrrel; 'I am perfectly aware of the difference betwixt a setter and a pointer, and I know the old-fashioned setter is become unfashionable among modern sportsmen. But I love my dog as a companion, as well as for his merits in the field; and a setter is more sagacious, more attached, and fitter for his place on the hearth-rug, than a pointer—not,' he added, 'from any deficiency of intellects on the pointer's part, but he is generally so abused while in the management of brutal breakers and grooms, that he loses all excepting his professional accomplishments, of finding and standing steady to game.'

'And who the d—l desires he should have more?' said Sir Bingo.

'Many people, Sir Bingo,' replied Tyrrel, 'have been of opinion, that both dogs and men may follow sport indifferently well, though they do happen, at the same time, to be fit for mixing in friendly intercourse in society.'

'That is, for licking trenchers, and scratching copper, I suppose,' said the baronet *sotto voce;* and added, in a louder and more distinct tone,—'He never before heard that a setter was fit to follow any man's heels but a poacher's.'

'You know it now then, Sir Bingo,' answered Tyrrel; 'and I hope you will not fall into so great a mistake again.'

The Peacemaker here seemed to think his interference necessary, and, surmounting his taciturnity, made the following pithy speech:—'By Cot! and do you see, as you are looking for my opinion, I think there is no dispute in the matter—because, by Cot! it occurs to me, d'ye see,

that ye are both right, by Cot! It may do fery well for my excellent friend Sir Bingo, who hath stables, and kennels, and what not, to maintain the six filthy prutes that are yelping and yowling all the tay, and all the neight too, under my window, by Cot! And if they are yelping and yowling there, may I never die, but I wish they were yelping and yowling somewhere else. But then there is many a man who may be as cood a gentleman at the bottom as my worthy friend Sir Bingo, though it may be that he is poor; and if he is poor—and as if it might be my own case, or that of this honest gentleman, Mr. Tirl, is that a reason or a law, that he is not to keep a prute of a tog, to help him to take his sports and his pleasures? and if he has not a stable or a kennel to put the crature into, must he not keep it in his pit of ped-room, or upon his parlour hearth, seeing that Luckie Dods would make the kitchen too hot for the paist—and so, if Mr. Tirl finds a setter more fitter for his purpose than a pointer, by Cot, I know no law against it, else may I never die the black death.'

If this oration appear rather long for the occasion, the reader must recollect that Captain MacTurk had in all probability the trouble of translating it from the periphrastic language of Ossian, in which it was originally conceived in his own mind.

The Man of Law replied to the Man of Peace, 'Ye are mistaken for ance in your life, captain, for there is a law against setters; and I will undertake to prove them to be the "lying dogs" which are mentioned in the auld Scots statute, and which all and sundry are discharged to keep, under a penalty of '——

Here the captain broke in, with a very solemn mien and dignified manner—'By Cot! Master Meiklewham, and I shall be asking what you mean by talking to me of peing mistaken, and apout lying togs, sir—pecause I would have you to know, and to pelieve, and to very well consider, that I never was mistaken in my life, sir, unless it was when I took you for a gentleman.'

'No offence, captain,' said Mr. Meiklewham; 'dinna break the wand of peace, man, you that should be the first to keep it. He is as cankered,' continued the Man of Law, apart to his patron, 'as an auld Hieland terrier, that

snaps at whatever comes near it—but I tell you ae thing, St. Ronan's, and that is on saul and conscience, that I believe this is the very lad Tirl that I raised a summons against before the justices—him and another hempie—in your father's time, for shooting on the Spring-well-head muirs.'

'The devil you did, Mick!' replied the lord of the manor, also aside; 'Well I am obliged to you for giving me some reason for the ill thoughts I had of him—I knew he was some trumpery scamp—I'll blow him, by'——

'Whisht—stop—hush—haud your tongue, St. Ronan's—keep a calm sough—ye see, I intented the process, by your worthy father's desire, before the Quarter Sessions—but I ken na—The auld sheriff-clerk stood the lad's friend—and some of the justices thought it was but a mistake of the marches, and sae we couldna get a judgement—and your father was very ill of the gout, and I was feared to vex him, and so I was fain to let the process sleep, for fear they had been assoilzied. Sae ye had better gang cautiously to work, St. Ronan's, for though they were summoned, they were not convict.'

'Could you not take up the action again?' said Mr. Mowbray.

'Whew! it 's been prescribed sax or seeven year syne. It is a great shame, St. Ronan's, that the game-laws, whilk are the very best protection that is left to country gentlemen against the encroachment of their inferiors, rin sae short a course of prescription—a poacher may just jink ye back and forward like a flea in a blanket (wi' pardon)—hap ye out of ae county and into anither at their pleasure, like pyots—and unless ye get your thumb-nail on them in the very nick o' time, ye may dine on a dish of prescription, and sup upon an absolvitor.'

'It is a shame indeed,' said Mowbray, turning from his confident and agent, and addressing himself to the company in general, yet not without a peculiar look directed to Tyrrel.

'What is a shame, sir?' said Tyrrel, conceiving that the observation was particularly addressed to him.

'That we should have so many poachers upon our muirs, sir,' answered St. Ronan's. 'I sometimes regret having

countenanced the Well here, when I think how many guns it has brought on my property every season.'

'Hout fie! hout awa, St. Ronan's!' said his Man of Law; 'no countenance the Waal? What would the countryside be without it, I would be glad to ken? It 's the greatest improvement that has been made on this country since the year forty-five. Na, na, it 's no the Waal that 's to blame for the poaching and delinquencies on the game. We maun to the Aultoun for the howf of that kind of cattle. Our rules at the Waal are clear and express against trespassers on the game.'

'I can't think,' said the squire, 'what made my father sell the property of the old change-house yonder to the hag that keeps it open out of spite, I think, and to harbour poachers and vagabonds! I cannot conceive what made him do so foolish a thing!'

'Probably because your father wanted money, sir,' said Tyrrel dryly; 'and my worthy landlady, Mrs. Dods, had got some. You know, I presume, sir, that I lodge there?'

'Oh, sir,' replied Mowbray, in a tone betwixt scorn and civility, 'you cannot suppose the present company is alluded to; I only presumed to mention as a fact, that we have been annoyed with unqualified people shooting on our grounds, without either liberty or licence. And I hope to have her sign taken down for it—that is all. There was the same plague in my father's days, I think, Mick?'

But Mr. Meiklewham, who did not like Tyrrel's looks so well as to induce him to become approver on the occasion, replied with an inarticulate grunt, addressed to the company, and a private admonition to his patron's own ear, 'to let sleeping dogs lie.'

'I can scarce forbear the fellow,' said St. Ronan's; 'and yet I cannot well tell where my dislike to him lies—but it would be d—d folly to turn out with him for nothing; and so, honest Mick, I will be as quiet as I can.'

'And that you may be so,' said Meiklewham, 'I think you had best take no more wine.'

'I think so too,' said the squire; 'for each glass I drink in his company gives me the heartburn—yet the man is not different from other raffs either—but there is a something about him intolerable to me.'

So saying, he pushed back his chair from the table, and —*regis ad exemplar*—after the pattern of the laird, all the company arose.

Sir Bingo got up with reluctance, which he testified by two or three deep growls, as he followed the rest of the company into the outer apartment, which served as an entrance-hall, and divided the dining-parlour from the tea-room, as it was called. Here, while the party were assuming their hats, for the purpose of joining the ladies society (which old-fashioned folk used only to take up for that of going into the open air), Tyrrel asked a smart footman, who stood near, to hand him the hat which lay on the table beyond.

'Call your own servant, sir,' answered the fellow, with the true insolence of a pampered menial.

'Your master,' answered Tyrrel, 'ought to have taught you good manners, my friend, before bringing you here.'

'Sir Bingo Binks is my master,' said the fellow, in the same insolent tone as before.

'Now for it, Bingie,' said Mowbray, who was aware that the baronet's pot-courage had arrived at fighting pitch.

'Yes!' said Sir Bingo aloud, and more articulately than usual. 'The fellow is my servant—what has any one to say to it?'

'I at least have my mouth stopped,' answered Tyrrel with perfect composure. 'I should have been surprised to have found Sir Bingo's servant better bred than himself.'

'What d'ye mean by that, sir?' said Sir Bingo, coming up in an offensive attitude, for he was no mean pupil of the Fives Court—'What d' ye mean by that? D—n you sir! I'll serve you out before you can say dumpling.'

'And I, Sir Bingo, unless you presently lay aside that look and manner, will knock you down before you can cry help.'

The visitor held in his hand a slip of oak, with which he gave a flourish, that, however slight, intimated some acquaintance with the noble art of single-stick. From this demonstration Sir Bingo thought it prudent somewhat to recoil, though backed by a party of friends, who, in their zeal for his honour, would rather have seen his bones broken in conflict bold, than his honour injured by a

discreditable retreat; and Tyrrel seemed to have some inclination to indulge them. But, at the very instant when his hand was raised with a motion of no doubtful import, a whispering voice, close to his ear, pronounced the emphatic words—'Are you a man?'

Not the thrilling tone with which our inimitable Siddons used to electrify the scene, when she uttered the same whisper, ever had a more powerful effect upon an auditor, than had these unexpected sounds on him, to whom they were now addressed. Tyrrel forgot everything—his quarrel—the circumstances in which he was placed—the company. The crowd was to him at once annihilated, and life seemed to have no other object than to follow the person who had spoken. But suddenly as he turned, the disappearance of the monitor was at least equally so, for, amid the group of commonplace countenances by which he was surrounded, there was none which assorted to the tone and words which possessed such a power over him. 'Make way,' he said, to those who surrounded him; and it was in the tone of one who was prepared, if necessary, to make way for himself.

Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's stepped forward. 'Come sir,' said he, 'this will not do—you have come here, a stranger among us, to assume airs and dignities, which, by G—d, would become a duke, or a prince! We must know who or what you are, before we permit you to carry your high tone any farther.'

This address seemed at once to arrest Tyrrel's anger, and his impatience to leave the company. He turned to Mowbray, collected his thoughts for an instant, and then answered him thus:—'Mr. Mowbray, I seek no quarrel with anyone here—with you, in particular, I am most unwilling to have any disagreement. I came here by invitation, not certainly expecting much pleasure, but, at the same time, supposing myself secure from incivility. In the last point, I find myself mistaken, and therefore wish the company good-night. I must also make my adieu to the ladies.' So saying, he walked several steps, yet, as it seemed, rather irresolutely, towards the door of the card-room—and then, to the increased surprise of the company, stopped suddenly, and muttering something about the

'unfitness of the time,' turned on his heel, and bowing haughtily, as there was way made for him, walked in the opposite direction towards the door which led to the outer hall.

'D—n me, Sir Bingo, will you let him off?' said Mowbray, who seemed to delight in pushing his friend into new scrapes—'To him, man—to him—he shows the white feather.'

Sir Bingo, thus encouraged, planted himself with a look of defiance exactly between Tyrrel and the door; upon which the retreating guest, bestowing on him most emphatically the epithet Fool, seized him by the collar, and flung him out of his way with some violence.

'I am to be found at the Old Town of Saint Ronan's by whomsoever has any concern with me.' Without waiting the issue of this aggression further than to utter those words, Tyrrel left the hotel. He stopped in the courtyard, however, with the air of one uncertain whither he intended to go, and who was desirous to ask some question, which seemed to die upon his tongue. At length his eye fell upon a groom, who stood not far from the door of the inn, holding in his hand a handsome pony, with a side-saddle.

'Whose'——said Tyrrel—but the rest of the question he seemed unable to utter.

The man, however, replied, as if he had heard the whole interrogation. 'Miss Mowbray's, sir, of Saint Ronan's—she leaves directly—and so I am walking the pony—a clever thing, sir, for a lady.'

'She returns to Shaws Castle by the Buck-stane road?'

'I suppose so, sir,' said the groom. 'It is the nighest, and Miss Clara cares little for rough roads. Zounds! she can spank it over wet and dry.'

Tyrrel turned away from the man, and hastily left the hotel—not, however, by the road which led to the Aultoun, but by a footpath among the natural copsewood, which, following the course of the brook, intersected the usual horse-road to Shaws Castle, the seat of Mr. Mowbray, at a romantic spot called the Buck-stane.

In a small peninsula, formed by a winding of the brook, was situated, on a rising hillock, a large rough-hewn pillar of stone, said by tradition to commemorate the fall of a stag of unusual speed, size, and strength, whose flight,

after having lasted through a whole summer's day, had there terminated in death, to the honour and glory of some ancient baron of Saint Ronan's, and of his stanch hounds. During the periodical cuttings of the copse, which the necessities of the family of St. Ronan's brought round more frequently than Ponty would have recommended, some oaks had been spared in the neighbourhood of this massive obelisk, old enough perhaps to have heard the whoop and hallo which followed the fall of the stag, and to have witnessed the raising of the rude monument, by which that great event was commemorated. These trees, with their broad spreading boughs, made a twilight even of noonday; and now that the sun was approaching its setting point, their shade already anticipated night. This was especially the case where three or four of them stretched their arms over a deep gully, through which winded the horse-path to Shaws Castle, at a point about a pistol-shot distant from the Buck-stane. As the principal access to Mr. Mowbray's mansion was by a carriage-way, which passed in a different direction, the present path was left almost in a state of nature, full of large stones, and broken by gullies, delightful, from the varied character of its banks, to the picturesque traveller, and most inconvenient, nay, dangerous to him who had a stumbling horse.

The footpath to the Buck-stane, which here joined the bridle-road, had been constructed, at the expense of a subscription, under the direction of Mr. Winterblossom, who had taste enough to see the beauties of this secluded spot, which was exactly such as in earlier times might have harboured the ambush of some marauding chief. This recollection had not escaped Tyrrel, to whom the whole scenery was familiar, who now hastened to the spot, as one which peculiarly suited his present purpose. He sat down by one of the larger projecting trees, and, screened by its enormous branches from observation, was enabled to watch the road from the hotel for a great part of its extent, while he was himself invisible to any who might travel upon it.

Meanwhile his sudden departure excited a considerable sensation among the party whom he had just left, and who were induced to form conclusions not very favourable to his character. Sir Bingo, in particular, blustered loudly

and more loudly, in proportion to the increasing distance betwixt himself and his antagonist, declaring his resolution to be revenged on the scoundrel for his insolence—to drive him from the neighbourhood,—and I know not what other menaces of formidable import. The devil, in the old stories of diablerie, was always sure to start up at the elbow of anyone who nursed diabolical purposes, and only wanted a little backing from the foul fiend to carry his imaginations into action. The noble Captain MacTurk had so far this property of his infernal majesty, that the least hint of an approaching quarrel drew him always to the vicinity of the party concerned. He was now at Sir Bingo's side, and was taking his own view of the matter, in his character of peacemaker.

'By Cot! and it 's very exceedingly true, my good friend, Sir Binco—and as you say, it concerns your honour, and the honour of the place, and credit and character of the whole company, by Cot! that this matter be properly looked after; for, as I think, he laid hands on your body, my excellent goot friend.'

'Hands, Captain MacTurk!' exclaimed Sir Bingo in some confusion; 'no, blast him—not so bad as that neither—if he had, I should have handed *him* over the window—but, by ——, the fellow had the impudence to offer to collar me—I had just stepped back to square at him, when, curse me, the blackguard ran away.'

'Right, vara right, Sir Bingo,' said the Man of Law, 'a vara perfect blackguard, a poaching sorning sort of fallow, that I will have scoured out of the country before he be three days aulder. Fash you your beard nae further about the matter, Sir Bingo.'

'By Cot! but I can tell you, Mr. Meiklewham,' said the Man of Peace, with great solemnity of visage, 'that you are scalding your lips in other folk's kale, and that it is necessary for the credit, and honour, and respect of this company, at the Well of St. Ronan's, that Sir Binco goes by more competent advice than yours upon the present occasion, Mr. Meiklewham; for though your counsel may do very well in a small debt-court, here, do you see, Mr. Meiklewham, is a question of honour, which is not a thing in your line, as I take it.'

'No, before George! is it not,' answered Meiklewham; 'e'en take it all to yoursell, captain, and meikle ye are likely to make on't.'

'Then,' said the captain, 'Sir Binco, I will beg the favour of your company to the smoking-room, where we may have a cigar and a glass of gin-twist; and we will consider how the honour of the company must be supported and upholden upon the present conjuncture.'

The baronet complied with this invitation, as much, perhaps, in consequence of the medium through which the captain intended to convey his warlike counsels, as for the pleasure with which he anticipated the result of these counsels themselves. He followed the military step of his leader, whose stride was more stiff, and his form more perpendicular, when exalted by the consciousness of an approaching quarrel, to the smoking-room, where, sighing as he lighted his cigar, Sir Bingo prepared to listen to the words of wisdom and valour as they should flow in mingled stream from the lips of Captain MacTurk.

Meanwhile the rest of the company joined the ladies. 'Here has been Clara,' said the Lady Penelope to Mr. Mowbray; 'here has been Miss Mowbray among us, like the ray of a sun which does but dazzle and die.'

'Ah, poor Clara,' said Mowbray; 'I thought I saw her thread her way through the crowd a little while since, but I was not sure.'

'Well,' said Lady Penelope, 'she has asked us all up to Shaws Castle on Thursday, to a *déjeûner à la fourchette*—I trust you confirm your sister's invitation, Mr. Mowbray?'

'Certainly, Lady Penelope,' replied Mowbray; 'and I am truly glad Clara has had the grace to think of it—How we shall acquit ourselves is a different question, for neither she nor I are much accustomed to play host or hostess.'

'Oh! it will be delightful, I am sure,' said Lady Penelope; 'Clara has a grace in everything she does; and you, Mr. Mowbray, can be a perfectly well-bred gentleman—when you please.'

'That qualification is severe—Well—good manners be my speed—I will certainly please to do my best, when I see your ladyship at Shaws Castle, which has received no

company this many a day. Clara and I have lived a wild life of it, each in their own way.'

'Indeed, Mr. Mowbray,' said Lady Binks, 'if I might presume to speak—I think you do suffer your sister to ride about too much without an attendant. I know Miss Mowbray rides as woman never rode before, but still an accident may happen.'

'An accident?' replied Mowbray—'Ah, Lady Binks! accidents happen as frequently when ladies *have* attendants as when they are without them.'

Lady Binks, who, in her maiden state, had cantered a good deal about these woods under Sir Bingo's escort, coloured, looked spiteful, and was silent.

'Besides,' said John Mowbray, more lightly, 'where is the risk, after all? There are no wolves in our woods to eat up our pretty Red Riding-Hoods; and no lions either —except those of Lady Penelope's train.'

'Who draw the car of Cybele,' said Mr. Chatterly.

Lady Penelope luckily did not understand the allusion, which was indeed better intended than imagined.

'Apropos!' she said; 'what have you done with the great lion of the day? I see Mr. Tyrrel nowhere—Is he finishing an additional bottle with Sir Bingo?'

'Mr. Tyrrel, madam,' said Mowbray, 'has acted successively the lion rampant, and the lion passant; he has been quarrelsome, and he has run away—fled from the ire of your doughty knight, Lady Binks.'

'I am sure I hope not,' said Lady Binks; 'my chevalier's unsuccessful campaigns have been unable to overcome his taste for quarrels—a victory would make a fighting-man of him for life.'

'That inconvenience might bring its own consolations,' said Winterblossom, apart to Mowbray; 'quarrellers do not usually live long.'

'No, no,' replied Mowbray, 'the lady's despair which broke out just now, even in her own despite, is quite natural—absolutely legitimate. Sir Bingo will give her no chance that way.'

Mowbray then made his bow to Lady Penelope, and in answer to her request that he would join the ball or the card-table, observed, that he had no time to lose; that the

heads of the old domestics at Shaws Castle would be by this time absolutely turned by the apprehensions of what Thursday was to bring forth; and that as Clara would certainly give no directions for the proper arrangements, it was necessary that he should take that trouble himself.

'If you ride smartly,' said Lady Penelope, 'you may save even a temporary alarm, by overtaking Clara, dear creature, ere she gets home. She sometimes suffers her pony to go at will along the lane, as slow as Betty Foy's.'

'Ah, but then,' said little Miss Digges, 'Miss Mowbray sometimes gallops as if the lark was a snail to her pony—and it quite frights one to see her.'

The doctor touched Mrs. Blower, who had approached so as to be on the verge of the genteel circle, though she did not venture within it,—they exchanged sagacious looks, and a most pitiful shake of the head. Mowbray's eye happened at that moment to glance on them; and doubtless, notwithstanding their hasting to compose their countenances to a different expression, he comprehended what was passing through their minds;—and perhaps it awoke a corresponding note in his own. He took his hat, and with a cast of thought upon his countenance which it seldom wore, left the apartment. A moment afterwards his horse's feet were heard spurning the pavement, as he started off at a sharp pace.

'There is something singular about these Mowbrays to-night,' said Lady Penelope. 'Clara, poor dear angel, is always particular; but I should have thought Mowbray had too much worldly wisdom to be fanciful. What are you consulting your *souvenir* for with such attention, my dear Lady Binks?'

'Only for the age of the moon,' said her ladyship, putting the little tortoise-shell-bound calendar into her reticule; and having done so, she proceeded to assist Lady Penelope in the arrangements for the evening.

CHAPTER IX

THE MEETING

We meet as shadows in the land of dreams,
Which speak not but in signs.—ANONYMOUS.

BEHIND one of the old oaks which we have described in the preceding chapter, shrouding himself from observation like a hunter watching for his game, or an Indian for his enemy, but with different, very different purpose, Tyrrel lay on his breast near the Buck-stane, his eye on the horse-road which winded down the valley, and his ear alertly awake to every sound which mingled with the passing breeze, or with the ripple of the brook.

'To have met her in yonder congregated assembly of brutes and fools'—such was a part of his internal reflections—'had been little less than an act of madness—madness almost equal in its degree to that cowardice which has hitherto prevented my approaching her, when our eventful meeting might have taken place unobserved. But now—now—my resolution is as fixed as the place is itself favourable. I will not wait till some chance again shall throw us together, with a hundred malignant eyes to watch, and wonder, and stare, and try in vain to account for the expression of feelings which I might find it impossible to suppress. Hark—hark!—I hear the tread of a horse. No—it was the changeful sound of the water rushing over the pebbles. Surely she cannot have taken the other road to Shaws Castle! No—the sounds become distinct—her figure is visible on the path, coming swiftly forward. Have I the courage to show myself? I have—the hour is come, and what must be shall be.'

Yet this resolution was scarcely formed ere it began to fluctuate, when he reflected upon the fittest manner of carrying it into execution. To show himself at a distance, might give the lady an opportunity of turning back and avoiding the interview which he had determined upon—to hide himself till the moment when her horse, in rapid motion, should pass his lurking-place, might be attended

with danger to the rider—and while he hesitated which course to pursue, there was some chance of his missing the opportunity of presenting himself to Miss Mowbray at all. He was himself sensible of this, formed a hasty and desperate resolution not to suffer the present moment to escape, and, just as the ascent induced the pony to slacken its pace, Tyrrel stood in the middle of the defile, about six yards distant from the young lady.

She pulled up the reins, and stopped as if arrested by a thunderbolt. 'Clara!'—'Tyrrel!' These were the only words which were exchanged between them, until Tyrrel, moving his feet as slowly as if they had been of lead, began gradually to diminish the distance which lay betwixt them. It was then that, observing his closer approach, Miss Mowbray called out with great eagerness, —'No nearer—no nearer! So long have I endured your presence, but if you approach me more closely, I shall be mad indeed!'

'What do you fear?' said Tyrrel, in a hollow voice—'What can you fear?' and he continued to draw nearer, until they were within a pace of each other.

Clara, meanwhile, dropping her bridle, clasped her hands together, and held them up towards Heaven, muttering, in a voice scarcely audible, 'Great God!—if this apparition be formed by my heated fancy, let it pass away; if it be real, enable me to bear its presence! Tell me, I conjure you, are you Francis Tyrrel in blood and body, or is this but one of those wandering visions, that have crossed my path and glared on me, but without daring to abide my steadfast glance?'

'I am Francis Tyrrel,' answered he, 'in blood and body, as much as she to whom I speak is Clara Mowbray.'

'Then God have mercy on us both!' said Clara, in a tone of deep feeling.

'Amen!' said Tyrrel. 'But what avails this excess of agitation? You saw me but now, Miss Mowbray—your voice still rings in my ears. You saw me but now—you spoke to me—and that when I was among strangers. Why not preserve your composure when we are where no human eye can see—no human ear can hear?'

'Is it so?' said Clara; 'and was it indeed yourself

whom I saw even now? I thought so, and something I said at the time, but my brain has been but ill settled since we last met. But I am well now—quite well; I have invited all the people yonder to come to Shaws Castle—my brother desired me to do it. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Tyrrel there, though I think there is some old grudge between my brother and you.'

'Alas! Clara, you mistake. Your brother I have scarcely seen,' replied Tyrrel, much distressed, and apparently uncertain in what tone to address her, which might soothe and not irritate her mental malady, of which he could now entertain no doubt.

'True—true,' she said, after a moment's reflection, 'my brother was then at college. It was my father, my poor father, whom you had some quarrel with. But you will come to Shaws Castle on Thursday, at two o'clock? John will be glad to see you—he can be kind when he pleases—and then we will talk of old times. I must get on, to have things ready. Good evening.'

She would have passed him, but he took gently hold of the rein of her bridle. 'I will walk with you, Clara,' he said; 'the road is rough and dangerous—you ought not to ride fast. I will walk along with you, and we will talk of former times now, more conveniently than in company.'

'True—true—very true, Mr. Tyrrel—it shall be as you say. My brother obliges me sometimes to go into company at that hateful place down yonder; and I do so because he likes it, and because the folks let me have my own way, and come and go as I list. Do you know, Tyrrel, that very often when I am there, and John has his eye on me, I can carry it on as gaily as if you and I had never met?'

'I would to God we never had,' said Tyrrel in a trembling voice, 'since this is to be the end of all!'

'And wherefore should not sorrow be the end of sin and of folly? And when did happiness come of disobedience? And when did sound sleep visit a bloody pillow? That is what I say to myself, Tyrrel, and that is what you must learn to say too, and then you will bear your burden as cheerfully as I endure mine. If we have no more than our deserts, why should we complain? You are shedding

tears, I think. Is not that childish? They say it is a relief —if so, weep on, and I will look another way.'

Tyrrel walked on by the pony's side, in vain endeavouring to compose himself so as to reply.

'Poor Tyrrel,' said Clara, after she had remained silent for some time. 'Poor Frank Tyrrel! Perhaps you will say in your turn, Poor Clara, but I am not so poor in spirit as you: the blast may bend, but it shall never break me.'

There was another long pause; for Tyrrel was unable to determine with himself in what strain he could address the unfortunate young lady without awakening recollections equally painful to her feelings, and dangerous, when her precarious state of health was considered. At length she herself proceeded:—

'What needs all this, Tyrrel?—and indeed, why came you here? Why did I find you but now brawling and quarrelling among the loudest of the brawlers and quarrellers of yonder idle and dissipated debauchees? You were used to have more temper—more sense. Another person—aye, another that you and I once knew—he might have committed such a folly, and he would have acted perhaps in character. But you, who pretend to wisdom—for shame, for shame! And indeed, when we talk of that, what wisdom was there in coming hither at all, or what good purpose can your remaining here serve? Surely you need not come, either to renew your own unhappiness or to augment mine?'

'To augment yours—God forbid!' answered Tyrrel. 'No—I came hither only because, after so many years of wandering, I longed to revisit the spot where all my hopes lay buried.'

'Aye—buried is the word,' she replied, 'crushed down and buried when they budded fairest. I often think of it, Tyrrel; and there are times when, Heaven help me! I can think of little else. Look at me—you remember what I was—see what grief and solitude have made me.'

She flung back the veil which surrounded her riding-hat, and which had hitherto hid her face. It was the same countenance which he had formerly known in all the bloom of early beauty; but though the beauty remained, the bloom was fled for ever. Not the agitation of exercise—

not that which arose from the pain and confusion of this unexpected interview, had called to poor Clara's cheek even the momentary semblance of colour. Her complexion was marble-white, like that of the finest piece of statuary.

'Is it possible?' said Tyrrel; 'can grief have made such ravages?'

'Grief,' replied Clara, 'is the sickness of the mind, and its sister is the sickness of the body—they are twin-sisters, Tyrrel, and are seldom long separate. Sometimes the body's disease comes first, and dims our eyes and palsies our hands, before the fire of our mind and of our intellect is quenched. But mark me—soon after comes her cruel sister with her urn, and sprinkles cold dew on our hopes and on our loves, our memory, our recollections, and our feelings, and shows us that they cannot survive the decay of our bodily powers.'

'Alas!' said Tyrrel, 'is it come to this?'

'To this,' she replied, speaking from the rapid and irregular train of her own ideas, rather than comprehending the purport of his sorrowful exclamation,—'to this it must ever come, while immortal souls are wedded to the perishable substance of which our bodies are composed. There is another state, Tyrrel, in which it will be otherwise—God grant our time of enjoying it were come!'

She fell into a melancholy pause, which Tyrrel was afraid to disturb. The quickness with which she spoke, marked but too plainly the irregular succession of thought, and he was obliged to restrain the agony of his own feelings, rendered more acute by a thousand painful recollections, lest, by giving way to his expressions of grief, he should throw her into a still more disturbed state of mind.

'I did not think,' she proceeded, 'that after so horrible a separation, and so many years, I could have met you thus calmly and reasonably. But although what we were formerly to each other can never be forgotten, it is now all over, and we are only friends. Is it not so?'

Tyrrel was unable to reply.

'But I must not remain here,' she said, 'till the evening grows darker on me. We shall meet again, Tyrrel—meet as friends—nothing more. You will come up to Shaws Castle and see me?—no need of secrecy now—my poor

father is in his grave, and his prejudices sleep with him; my brother John is kind, though he is stern and severe sometimes. Indeed, Tyrrel, I believe he loves me, though he has taught me to tremble at his frown when I am in spirits and talk too much. But he loves me, at least I think so, for I am sure I love him; and I try to go down amongst them yonder, and to endure their folly, and, all things considered, I do carry on the farce of life wonderfully well. We are but actors, you know, and the world but a stage.'

'And ours has been a sad and tragic scene,' said Tyrrel in the bitterness of his heart, unable any longer to refrain from speech.

'It has indeed—but, Tyrrel, when was it otherwise with engagements formed in youth and in folly? You and I would, you know, become men and women, while we were yet scarcely more than children. We have run, while yet in our nonage, through the passions and adventures of youth, and therefore we are now old before our day, and the winter of our life has come on ere its summer was well begun. O Tyrrel! often and often have I thought of this! Thought of it often? Alas! when will the time come that I shall be able to think of anything else!'

The poor young woman sobbed bitterly, and her tears began to flow with a freedom which they had not probably enjoyed for a length of time. Tyrrel walked on by the side of her horse, which now prosecuted its road homewards, unable to devise a proper mode of addressing the unfortunate young lady, and fearing alike to awaken her passions and his own. Whatever he might have proposed to say was disconcerted by the plain indications that her mind was clouded, more or less slightly, with a shade of insanity, which deranged, though it had not destroyed, her powers of judgement.

At length he asked her, with as much calmness as he could assume, if she was contented—if aught could be done to render her situation more easy—if there was aught of which she could complain which he might be able to remedy? She answered gently that she was calm and resigned, when her brother would permit her to stay at home; but that when she was brought into society, she experienced such a change as that which the water of the

brook that slumbers in a crystalline pool of the rock may be supposed to feel, when, gliding from its quiet bed, it becomes involved in the hurry of the cataract.

'But my brother Mowbray,' she said, 'thinks he is right, and perhaps he is so. There are things on which we may ponder too long; and were he mistaken, why should I not constrain myself in order to please him?—there are so few left to whom I can now give either pleasure or pain. I am a gay girl, too, in conversation, Tyrrel—still as gay for a moment as when you used to chide me for my folly. So, now I have told you all, I have one question to ask on my part—one question—if I had but breath to ask it. Is *he* still alive?'

'He lives,' answered Tyrrel, but in a tone so low that naught but the eager attention which Miss Mowbray paid could possibly have caught such feeble sounds.

'Lives!' she exclaimed, 'lives!—he lives, and the blood on your hand is not then indelibly imprinted. O Tyrrel, did you but know the joy which this assurance gives to me!'

'Joy!' replied Tyrrel, 'joy, that the wretch lives who has poisoned our happiness for ever!—lives, perhaps, to claim you for his own?'

'Never, never shall he—dare he do so,' replied Clara wildly, 'while water can drown, while cords can strangle, steel pierce—while there is a precipice on the hill, a pool in the river—never—never!'

'Be not thus agitated, my dearest Clara,' said Tyrrel; 'I spoke I know not what—he lives indeed, but far distant, and, I trust, never again to revisit Scotland.'

He would have said more, but that, agitated with fear or passion, she struck her horse impatiently with her riding whip. The spirited animal, thus stimulated and at the same time restrained, became intractable, and reared so much, that Tyrrel, fearful of the consequences, and trusting to Clara's skill as a horsewoman, thought he best consulted her safety in letting go the rein. The animal instantly sprang forward on a broken and hilly path at a very rapid pace, and was soon lost to Tyrrel's anxious eyes.

As he stood pondering whether he ought not to follow Miss Mowbray towards Shaws Castle, in order to be satisfied

that no accident had befallen her on the road, he heard the tread of a horse's feet, advancing hastily in the same direction, leading from the hotel. Unwilling to be observed at this moment, he stepped aside under the shelter of the underwood, and presently afterwards saw Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, followed by a groom, ride hastily past his lurking-place, and pursue the same road which had been just taken by his sister. The presence of her brother seemed to assure Miss Mowbray's safety, and so removed Tyrrel's chief reason for following her. Involved in deep and melancholy reflection upon what had passed, nearly satisfied that his longer residence in Clara's vicinity could only add to her unhappiness and his own, yet unable to tear himself from that neighbourhood, or to relinquish feelings which had become entwined with his heart-strings, he returned to his lodgings in the Aultoun in a state of mind very little to be envied.

Tyrrel, on entering his apartment, found that it was not lighted, nor were the abigails of Mrs. Dods quite so alert as a waiter at Long's might have been to supply him with candles. Unapt at any time to exact much personal attendance, and desirous to shun at that moment the necessity of speaking to any person whatever, even on the most trifling subject, he walked down into the kitchen to supply himself with what he wanted. He did not at first observe that Mrs. Dods herself was present in this the very centre of her empire, far less that a lofty air of indignation was seated on the worthy matron's brow. At first it only vented itself in broken soliloquy and interjections ; as, for example, ' Vera bonny wark this !—vera creditable wark, indeed !—a decent house to be disturbed at these hours. Keep a public—as weel keep a bedlam ! '

Finding these murmurs attracted no attention, the dame placed herself betwixt her guest and the door, to which he was now retiring with his lighted candle, and demanded of him what was the meaning of such behaviour.

' Of what behaviour, madam ? ' said her guest, repeating her question in a tone of sternness and impatience so unusual with him, that perhaps she was sorry at the moment that she had provoked him out of his usual patient indifference ; nay, she might even feel intimidated at the altercation

she had provoked, for the resentment of a quiet and patient person has always in it something formidable to the professed and habitual grumbler. But her pride was too great to think of a retreat, after having sounded the signal for contest, and so she continued, though in a tone somewhat lowered.

'Maister Tirl, I wad but just ask you, that are a man of sense, whether I hae ony right to take your behaviour weel? Here have you been these ten days and mair, eating the best, and drinking the best, and taking up the best room in my house; and now to think of your gaun doun and taking up with yon idle hare-brained cattle at the Waal—I maun e'en be plain wi' ye—I like nane of the fair-fashioned folk that can say My Jo, and think it no; and therefore'——

'Mrs. Dods,' said Tyrrel, interrupting her, 'I have no time at present for trifles. I am obliged to you for your attention while I have been in your house; but the disposal of my time, here or elsewhere, must be according to my own ideas of pleasure or business. If you are tired of me as a guest, send in your bill to-morrow.'

'My bill!' said Mrs. Dods; 'my bill to-morrow! And what for no wait till Saturday, when it may be cleared atween us, plack and bawbee, as it was on Saturday last?'

'Well—we will talk of it to-morrow, Mrs. Dods. Good night.' And he withdrew accordingly.

Luckie Dods stood ruminating for a moment. 'The deil's in him,' she said, 'for he winna bide being thrawn. And I think the deil's in me too for thrawing him, sic a canny lad, and sae gude a customer; and I am judging he has something on his mind: want of siller it canna be—I am sure if I thought that, I wadna care about my small thing. But want o' siller it canna be—he pays ower the shillings as if they were sclate stanes, and that's no the way that folks part with their siller when there's but little on't—I ken weel eneugh how a customer looks that's near the grund of the purse. Well! I hope he winna mind onything of this nonsense the morn, and I'll try to guide my tongue something better. Hegh, sirs! but, as the minister says, it's an unruly member; troth, I am whiles ashamed o't mysell.'

CHAPTER X

RESOURCES

Come, let me have thy counsel, for I need it ;
Thou art of those who better help their friends
With sage advice, than usurers with gold,
Or brawlers with their swords—I'll trust to thee,
For I ask only from thee words, not deeds.
The Devil hath met his Match.

THE day of which we last gave the events chanced to be Monday, and two days therefore intervened betwixt it and that for which the entertainment was fixed, that was to assemble in the halls of the lord of the manor the flower of the company now at Saint Ronan's Well. The interval was but brief for the preparations necessary on an occasion so unusual ; since the house, though delightfully situated, was in very indifferent repair, and for years had never received any visitors, except when some blithe bachelor or fox-hunter shared the hospitality of Mr. Mowbray ; an event which became daily more and more uncommon ; for, as he himself almost lived at the Well, he generally contrived to receive his companions where it could be done without expense to himself. Besides, the health of his sister afforded an irresistible apology to any of those old-fashioned Scottish gentlemen, who might be too apt (in the rudeness of more primitive days) to consider a friend's house as their own. Mr. Mowbray was now, however, to the great delight of all his companions, nailed down, by invitation given and accepted, and they looked forward to the accomplishment of his promise, with the eagerness which the prospect of some entertaining novelty never fails to produce among idlers.

A good deal of trouble devolved on Mr. Mowbray, and his trusty agent, Mr. Meiklewham, before anything like decent preparation could be made for the ensuing entertainment ; and they were left to their unassisted endeavours by Clara, who, during both the Tuesday and Wednesday, obstinately kept herself secluded ; nor could her brother, either by threats or flattery, extort from her any light

concerning her purpose on the approaching and important Thursday. To do John Mowbray justice, he loved his sister as much as he was capable of loving anything but himself; and when, in several arguments, he had the mortification to find that she was not to be prevailed on to afford her assistance, he, without complaint, quietly set himself to do the best he could by his own unassisted judgement or opinion with regard to the necessary preparations.

This was not, at present, so easy a task as might be supposed; for Mowbray was ambitious of that character of *ton* and elegance, which masculine faculties alone are seldom capable of attaining on such momentous occasions. The more solid materials of a collation were indeed to be obtained for money from the next market-town, and were purchased accordingly; but he felt it was likely to present the vulgar plenty of a farmer's feast, instead of the elegant entertainment which might be announced in a corner of the county paper, as given by John Mowbray, Esq. of St. Ronan's, to the gay and fashionable company assembled at that celebrated spring. There was likely to be all sorts of error and irregularity in dishing, and in sending up; for Shaws Castle boasted neither an accomplished housekeeper, nor a kitchenmaid with a hundred pair of hands to execute her mandates. All the domestic arrangements were on the minutest system of economy consistent with ordinary decency, except in the stables, which were excellent and well kept. But can a groom of the stables perform the labours of a groom of the chambers? or can the gamekeeper arrange in tempting order the carcasses of the birds he has shot, strew them with flowers, and garnish them with piquant sauces? It would be as reasonable to expect a gallant soldier to act as undertaker, and conduct the funeral of the enemy he has slain.

In a word, Mowbray talked, and consulted, and advised, and squabbled, with the deaf cook, and a little old man whom he called the butler, until he at length perceived so little chance of bringing order out of confusion, or making the least advantageous impression on such obdurate understandings as he had to deal with, that he fairly committed the whole matter of the collation, with two or three hearty curses, to the charge of the officials principally

concerned, and proceeded to take the state of the furniture and apartments under his consideration.

Here he found himself almost equally helpless ; for what male wit is adequate to the thousand little coquetries practised in such arrangements ? how can masculine eyes judge of the degree of *demi-jour* which is to be admitted into a decorated apartment, or discriminate where the broad light should be suffered to fall on a tolerable picture, where it should be excluded, lest the stiff daub of a peri-wigged grandsire should become too rigidly prominent ? And if men are unfit for weaving such a fairy web of light and darkness as may best suit furniture, ornaments, and complexions, how shall they be adequate to the yet more mysterious office of arranging, while they disarrange, the various movables in the apartment ? so that while all has the air of negligence and chance, the seats are placed as if they had been transported by a wish to the spot most suitable for accommodation ; stiffness and confusion are at once avoided, the company are neither limited to a formal circle of chairs, nor exposed to break their noses over wandering stools ; but the arrangements seem to correspond to what ought to be the tone of the conversation, easy, without being confused, and regulated, without being constrained or stiffened.

Then how can a clumsy male wit attempt the arrangement of all the *chiffonerie*, by which old snuff-boxes, heads of canes, pomander boxes, lamer beads, and all the trash usually found in the pigeon-holes of the bureaus of old-fashioned ladies, may be now brought into play, by throwing them, carelessly grouped with other unconsidered trifles, such as are to be seen in the windows of a pawnbroker's shop, upon a marble *encognure*, or a mosaic work-table, thereby turning to advantage the trash and trinketry, which all the old maids or magpies, who have inhabited the mansion for a century, have contrived to accumulate. With what admiration of the ingenuity of the fair artist have I sometimes pried into these miscellaneous groups of *pseudo-bijouterie*, and seen the great grandsire's thumb-ring couchant with the coral and bells of the firstborn—and the boatswain's whistle of some old naval uncle, or his silver tobacco-box, redolent of Oroonoko, happily grouped

with the mother's ivory comb-case, still odorous of musk, and with some virgin aunt's tortoise-shell spectacle-case, and the eagle's talon of ebony, with which, in the days of long and stiff stays, our grandmothers were wont to alleviate any little irritation in their back or shoulders! Then there was the silver strainer, on which, in more economical times than ours, the lady of the house placed the tea-leaves, after the very last drop had been exhausted, that they might afterwards be hospitably divided among the company, to be eaten with sugar, and with bread and butter. Blessings upon a fashion which has rescued from the claws of abigails, and the melting-pot of the silversmith, those neglected *cimelia*, for the benefit of antiquaries and the decoration of side-tables! But who shall presume to place them there, unless under the direction of female taste? and of that Mr. Mowbray, though possessed of a large stock of such treasures, was for the present entirely deprived.

This digression upon his difficulties is already too long, or I might mention the laird's inexperience in the art of making the worse appear the better garnishment, of hiding a darned carpet with a new floor-cloth, and flinging an Indian shawl over a faded and threadbare sofa. But I have said enough, and more than enough, to explain his dilemma to any unassisted bachelor, who, without mother, sister, or cousin, without skilful housekeeper, or experienced clerk of the kitchen, or valet of parts and figure, adventures to give an entertainment, and aspires to make it elegant and *comme il faut*.

The sense of his insufficiency was the more vexatious to Mowbray, as he was aware he would find sharp critics in the ladies, and particularly in his constant rival, Lady Penelope Penfeather. He was, therefore, incessant in his exertions; and for two whole days ordered and disordered, demanded, commanded, countermanded, and reprimanded, without pause or cessation. The companion, for he could not be termed an assistant of his labours, was his trusty agent, who trotted from room to room after him, affording him exactly the same degree of sympathy which a dog doth to his master when distressed in mind, by looking in his face from time to time with a piteous gaze, as if to assure him that he partakes of his trouble, though he neither

comprehends the cause or the extent of it, nor has in the slightest degree the power to remove it.

At length, when Mowbray had got some matters arranged to his mind, and abandoned a great many which he would willingly have put in better order, he sat down to dinner upon the Wednesday preceding the appointed day, with his worthy aide-de-camp, Mr. Meiklewham; and, after bestowing a few muttered curses upon the whole concern,

MEIKLEWHAM AND MOWBRAY AT SHAWS CASTLE

and the fantastic old maid who had brought him into the scrape, by begging an invitation, declared that all things might now go to the devil their own way, for so sure as his name was John Mowbray, he would trouble himself no more about them.

Keeping this doughty resolution, he sat down to dinner with his counsel learned in the law; and speedily they dispatched the dish of chops which was set before them, and the better part of the bottle of old port, which served for its menstruum.

'We are well enough now,' said Mowbray, 'though we have had none of their d—d kickshaws.'

'A wame-fou' is a wame-fou',' said the writer, swabbing his greasy chops, 'whether it be of the barleymeal or the bran.'

'A cart-horse thinks so,' said Mowbray; 'but we must do as others do, and gentlemen and ladies are of a different opinion.'

'The waur for themselves and the country baith, St. Ronan's—it 's the jinketing and the jirbling wi' tea and wi' trumpery that brings our nobles to ninepence, and mony a het ha'-house to a hired lodging in the Abbey.'

The young gentleman paused for a few minutes—filled a bumper, and pushed the bottle to the senior—then said abruptly, 'Do you believe in luck, Mick?'

'In luck?' answered the attorney; 'what do you mean by the question?'

'Why, because I believe in luck myself—in a good or bad run of luck at cards.'

'You wad have mair luck the day, if you had never touched them,' replied his confidant.

'That is not the question now,' said Mowbray; 'but what I wonder at is the wretched chance that has attended us miserable lairds of St. Ronan's for more than a hundred years, that we have always been getting worse in the world, and never better. Never has there been such a backsliding generation, as the parson would say—half the country once belonged to my ancestors, and now the last furrows of it seem to be flying.'

'Fleeing!' said the writer, 'they are barking and fleeing baith. This Shaws Castle here, I'se warrant it flee up the chimney after the rest, were it not weel fastened down with your grandfather's tailzie.'

'D—n the tailzie!' said Mowbray; 'if they had meant to keep up their estate, they should have entailed it when it was worth keeping: to tie a man down to such an insignificant thing as St. Ronan's, is like tethering a horse on six roods of a Highland moor.'

'Ye have broke weel in on the mailing by your feus down at the Well,' said Meiklewham, 'and raxed ower the tether maybe a wee bit further than ye had ony right to do.'

'It was by your advice, was it not?' said the laird.

'I'se ne'er deny it, St. Ronan's,' answered the writer;

'but I am such a gude-natured guse, that I just set about pleasing you as an auld wife pleases a bairn.'

'Aye,' said the man of pleasure, 'when she reaches it a knife to cut its own fingers with. These acres would have been safe enough, if it had not been for your d—d advice.'

'And yet you were grumbling e'en now,' said the man of business, 'that you have not the power to gar the whole estate flee like a wild-duck across a bog? Troth, you need care little about it; for if you have incurred an irritancy—and sae thinks Mr. Wisebehind, the advocate, upon an A. B. memorial that I laid before him—your sister, or your sister's goodman, if she should take the fancy to marry, might bring a declarator, and evict Saint Ronan's frae ye in the course of twa or three sessions.'

'My sister will never marry,' said John Mowbray.

'That 's easily said,' replied the writer; 'but as broken a ship 's come to land. If onybody kend o' the chance she has o' the estate, there 's mony a weel-doing man would think little of the bee in her bonnet.'

'Harkye, Mr. Meiklewham,' said the laird, 'I will be obliged to you if you will speak of Miss Mowbray with the respect due to her father's daughter, and my sister.'

'Nae offence, St. Ronan's, nae offence,' answered the man of law; 'but ilka man maun speak sae as to be understood,—that is, when he speaks about business. Ye ken yoursell, that Miss Clara is no just like other folks; and were I you—it 's my duty to speak plain—I wad e'en gie in a bit scroll of a petition to the Lords, to be appointed *curator bonis*, in respect of her incapacity to manage her own affairs.'

'Meiklewham,' said Mowbray, 'you are a '—— and then stopped short.

'What am I, Mr. Mowbray?' said Meiklewham somewhat sternly—'What am I? I wad be glad to ken what I am.'

'A very good lawyer, I dare say,' replied St. Ronan's, who was too much in the power of his agent to give way to his first impulse. 'But I must tell you, that rather than take such a measure against poor Clara, as you recommend, I would give her up the estate, and become an ostler or a postilion for the rest of my life.'

'Ah, St. Ronan's,' said the man of law, 'if you had

wished to keep up the auld house, you should have taken another trade, than to become an ostler or a postilion. What ailed you, man, but to have been a lawyer as weel as other folks ? My auld master had a wee bit Latin about *rerum dominos gentemque togatam*, whilk signified, he said, that all lairds should be lawyers.'

'All lawyers are likely to become lairds, I think,' replied Mowbray; 'they purchase our acres by the thousand, and pay us, according to the old story, with a multiple-poinding, as your learned friends call it, Mr. Meiklewham.'

'Weel—and mightna you have purchased as weel as other folks ? '

'Not I,' replied the laird; 'I have no turn for that service, I should only have wasted bombazine on my shoulders, and flour upon my three-tailed wig—should but have lounged away my mornings in the Outer House, and my evenings at the playhouse, and acquired no more law than what would have made me a wise justice at a small-debt court.'

'If you gained little, you would have lost as little,' said Meiklewham; 'and albeit ye were nae great gun at the bar, ye might ay have gotten a sheriffdom, or a commissaryship, amang the lave, to keep the banes green; and sae ye might have saved your estate from deteriorating, if ye didna mend it muckle.'

'Yes, but I could not have had the chance of doubling it, as I might have done,' answered Mowbray, 'had that inconstant jade, Fortune, but stood a moment faithful to me. I tell you, Mick, that I have been, within this twelvemonth, worth a hundred thousand—worth fifty thousand—worth nothing, but the remnant of this wretched estate, which is too little to do one good while it is mine, though, were it sold, I could start again, and mend my hand a little.'

'Aye, aye, just fling the helve after the hatchet,' said his legal adviser—'that 's a' you think of. What signifies winning a hundred thousand pounds, if you win them to lose them a' again ? '

'What signifies it ? ' replied Mowbray. 'Why, it signifies as much to a man of spirit, as having won a battle signifies to a general—no matter that he is beaten afterwards in

his turn, he knows there is luck for him as well as others, and so he has spirit to try it again. Here is the young Earl of Etherington will be amongst us in a day or two—they say he is up to everything—if I had but five hundred to begin with, I should be soon up to him.'

'Mr. Mowbray,' said Meiklewham, 'I am sorry for ye. I have been your house's man of business—I may say, in some measure, your house's servant—and now I am to see an end of it all, and just by the lad that I thought maist likely to set it up again better than ever; for, to do ye justice, you have ay had an ee to your ain interest, sae far as your lights gaed. It brings tears into my auld een.'

'Never weep for the matter, Mick,' answered Mowbray; 'some of it will stick, my old boy, in your pockets, if not in mine—your service will not be altogether gratuitous, my old friend—the labourer is worthy of his hire.'

'Weel I wot is he,' said the writer; 'but double fees would hardly carry folk through some wark. But if ye will have siller, ye maun have siller—but, I warrant, it goes just where the rest gaed.'

'No, by twenty devils!' exclaimed Mowbray, 'to fail this time is impossible—Jack Wolverine was too strong for Etherington at anything he could name; and I can beat Wolverine from the Land's End to Johnnie Groat's—but there must be something to go upon—the blunt must be had, Mick.'

'Very likely—nae doubt—that is always provided it *can* be had,' answered the legal adviser.

'That's your business, my old cock,' said Mowbray. 'This youngster will be here perhaps to-morrow, with money in both pockets—he takes up his rents as he comes down, Mick—think of that, my old friend.'

'Weel for them that have rents to take up,' said Meiklewham; 'ours are lying rather ower low to be lifted at present. But are you sure this earl is a man to mell with?—are you sure ye can win of him, and that if you do, he can pay his losings, Mr. Mowbray?—because I have kend mony ane come for wool, and gang hame shorn; and though ye are a clever young gentleman, and I am bound to suppose ye ken as much about life as most folk, and all that, yet some gate or other ye have ay come off at the

losing hand, as ye have ower much reason to ken this day—howbeit '——

'Oh, the devil take your gossip, my dear Mick! If you can give no help, spare drowning me with your pother. Why, man, I was a fresh hand—had my apprentice-fees to pay—and these are no trifles, Mick. But what of that? I am free of the company now, and can trade on my own bottom.'

'Aweel, aweel, I wish it may be sae,' said Meiklewham.

'It will be so, and it shall be so, my trusty friend,' replied Mowbray cheerily, 'so you will but help me to the stock to trade with.'

'The stock?—what d'ye ca' the stock? I ken nae stock that ye have left.'

'But *you* have plenty, my old boy—Come, sell out a few of your three per cents; I will pay difference—interest—exchange—everything.'

'Aye, aye—everything or naething,' answered Meiklewham; 'but as you are sae very pressing, I hae been thinking—Whan is the siller wanted?'

'This instant—this day—to-morrow at furthest!' exclaimed the proposed borrower.

'Wh—ew!' whistled the lawyer, with a long prolongation of the note; 'the thing is impossible.'

'It must be, Mick, for all that,' answered Mr. Mowbray, who knew by experience that *impossible*, when uttered by his accommodating friend in this tone, meant only, when interpreted, extremely difficult, and very expensive.

'Then it must be by Miss Clara selling her stock, now that ye speak of stock,' said Meiklewham; 'I wonder ye didna think of this before.'

'I wish you had been dumb rather than that you had mentioned it now,' said Mowbray, starting as if stung by an adder—'What, Clara's pittance!—the trifle my aunt left her for her own fanciful expenses—her own little private store, that she puts to so many good purposes—Poor Clara, that has so little! And why not rather your own, Master Meiklewham, who call yourself the friend and servant of our family?'

'Aye, St. Ronan's,' answered Meiklewham, 'that is a' very true—but service is nae inheritance; and as for

friendship, it begins at hame, as wise folks have said lang before our time. And for that matter, I think they that are nearest sib should take maist risk. You are nearer and dearer to your sister, St. Ronan's, than you are to poor Saunders Meiklewham, that hasna sae muckle gentle blood as would supper up a hungry flea.'

'I will not do this,' said St. Ronan's, walking up and down with much agitation; for, selfish as he was, he loved his sister, and loved her the more on account of those peculiarities which rendered his protection indispensable to her comfortable existence—'I will not,' he said, 'pillage her, come on't what will. I will rather go a volunteer to the Continent, and die like a gentleman.'

He continued to pace the room in a moody silence, which began to disturb his companion, who had not been hitherto accustomed to see his patron take matters so deeply. At length he made an attempt to attract the attention of the silent and sullen ponderer.

'Mr. Mowbray'—no answer—'I was saying, St. Ronan's'—still no reply. 'I have been thinking about this matter—and'——

'And *what*, sir?' said St. Ronan's, stopping short, and speaking in a stern tone of voice.

'And to speak truth, I see little feasibility in the matter ony way; for if ye had the siller in your pocket to-day, it would be a' in the Earl of Etherington's the morn.'

'Pshaw! you are a fool,' answered Mowbray.

'That is not unlikely,' said Meiklewham; 'but so is Sir Bingo Binks, and yet he's had the better of you, Saint Ronan's, this twa or three times.'

'It is false!—he has not,' answered St. Ronan's fiercely.

'Weel I wot,' resumed Meiklewham, 'he took you in about the saumon fish, and some other wager ye lost to him this very day.'

'I tell you once more, Meiklewham, you are a fool, and no more up to my trim than you are to the longitude—Bingo is got shy—I must give him a little line, that is all—then I shall strike him to purpose—I am as sure of him as I am of the other—I know the fly they will both rise to—this cursed want of five hundred will do me out of ten thousand!'

If you are so certain of being the bagster—so very certain, I mean, of sweeping stakes,—what harm will Miss Clara come to by your having the use of her siller? You can make it up to her for the risk ten times told.'

'And so I can, by Heaven!' said St. Ronan's. 'Mick, you are right, and I am a scrupulous, chicken-hearted fool. Clara shall have a thousand for her poor five hundred —she shall, by ——. And I will carry her to Edinburgh for a season, or perhaps to London, and we will have the best advice for her case, and the best company to divert her. And if they think her a little odd—why, d—n me, I am her brother, and will bear her through it. Yes—yes—you're right; there can be no hurt in borrowing five hundred of her for a few days, when such profit may be made on 't, both for her and me.—Here, fill the glasses, my old boy, and drink success to it, for you are right.'

'Here is success to it, with all my heart,' answered Meiklewham, heartily glad to see his patron's sanguine temper arrive at this desirable conclusion, and yet willing to hedge in his own credit; 'but it is *you* are right, and not *me*, for I advise nothing except on your assurances that you can make your ain of this English earl, and of this Sir Bingo—and if you can but do that, I am sure it would be unwise and unkind in ony ane of your friends to stand in your light.'

'True, Mick, true,' answered Mowbray. 'And yet dice and cards are but bones and pasteboard, and the best horse ever started may slip a shoulder before he get to the winning-post—and so I wish Clara's venture had not been in such a bottom. But, hang it, care killed a cat—I can hedge as well as any one, if the odds turn up against me—so let us have the cash, Mick.'

'Aha! but there go two words to that bargain—the stock stands in my name, and Tam Turnpenny the banker's, as trustees for Miss Clara—Now, get you her letter to us, desiring us to sell out and to pay you the proceeds, and Tam Turnpenny will let you have five hundred pounds *instanter*, on the faith of the transaction; for I fancy you would desire a' the stock to be sold out, and it will produce more than six hundred, or seven hundred pounds either—

and I reckon you will be selling out the whole—it 's needless making twa bites of a cherry.'

'True,' answered Mowbray; 'since we must be rogues, or something like it, let us make it worth our while at least; so give me a form of the letter, and Clara shall copy it—that is, if she consents; for you know she can keep her own opinion as well as any other woman in the world.'

'And that,' said Mieklewham, 'is as the wind will keep its way, preach to us as you like. But if I might advise about Miss Clara—I wad say naething mair than that I was stressed for the penny money; for I mistake her muckle if she would like to see you ganging to pitch and toss wi' this lord and tither baronet for her aunt's three per cents—I ken she has some queer notions—she gies away the feck of the dividends on that very stock in downright charity.'

'And I am in hazard to rob the poor as well as my sister!' said Mowbray, filling once more his own glass and his friend's. 'Come, Mick, no skylights—here is Clara's health—she is an angel—and I am—what I will not call myself, and suffer no other man to call me. But I shall win this time—I am sure I shall, since Clara's fortune depends upon it.'

'Now, I think, on the other hand,' said Meiklewham, 'that if anything should chance wrang (and Heaven kens that the best-laid schemes will gang ajee), it will be a great comfort to think that the ultimate losers will only be the poor folk, that have the parish between them and absolute starvation—if your sister spent her ain siller, it would be a very different story.'

'Hush, Mick—for God's sake, hush, mine honest friend,' said Mowbray; 'it is quite true; thou art a rare counsellor, in time of need, and hast as happy a manner of reconciling a man's conscience with his necessities as might set up a score of casuists; but beware, my most zealous counsellor and confessor, how you drive the nail too far—I promise you some of the chaffing you are at just now rather abates my pluck. Well—give me your scroll—I will to Clara with it—though I would rather meet the best shot in Britain, with ten paces of green sod betwixt us.' So saying, he left the apartment.

CHAPTER XI

FRATERNAL LOVE

Nearest of blood should still be next in love;
And when I see these happy children playing,
While William gathers flowers for Ellen's ringlets,
And Ellen dresses flies for William's angle,
I scarce can think, that in advancing life,
Coldness, unkindness, interest, or suspicion,
Will e'er divide that unity so sacred,
Which Nature bound at birth.—ANONYMOUS.

WHEN Mowbray had left his dangerous adviser, in order to steer the course which his agent had indicated, without offering to recommend it, he went to the little parlour which his sister was wont to term her own, and in which she spent great part of her time. It was fitted up with a sort of fanciful neatness; and in its perfect arrangement and good order formed a strong contrast to the other apartments of the old and neglected mansion-house. A number of little articles lay on the work-table, indicating the elegant, and, at the same time, the unsettled turn of the inhabitant's mind. There were unfinished drawings, blotted music, needlework of various kinds, and many other little female tasks; all undertaken with zeal, and so far prosecuted with art and elegance, but all flung aside before any one of them was completed.

Clara herself sat upon a little low couch by the window, reading, or at least turning over the leaves of a book, in which she seemed to read. But instantly starting up when she saw her brother, she ran towards him with the most cordial cheerfulness.

'Welcome, welcome, my dear John; this is very kind of you to come to visit your recluse sister. I have been trying to nail my eyes and my understanding to a stupid book here, because they say too much thought is not quite good for me. But either the man's dullness, or my want of the power of attending, makes my eyes pass over the page, just as one seems to read in a dream, without being able to comprehend one word of the matter. You shall

talk to me, and that will do better. What can I give you to show that you are welcome ? I am afraid tea is all I have to offer, and that you set too little store by.'

'I shall be glad of a cup at present,' said Mowbray, 'for I wish to speak with you.'

'Then Jessy shall make it ready instantly,' said Miss Mowbray, ringing, and giving orders to her waiting-maid—'but you must not be ungrateful, John, and plague me

CLARA MOWBRAY'S ROOM, SHAWS CASTLE

with any of the ceremonial for your fête—"sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." I will attend, and play my part as prettily as you can desire ; but to think of it beforehand would make both my head and my heart ache ; and so I beg you will spare me on the subject.'

'Why, you wild kitten,' said Mowbray, 'you turn every day more shy of human communication—we shall have you take the woods one day, and become as savage as the Princess Caraboo. But I will plague you about nothing if I can help it. If matters go not smooth on the great day,

they must e'en blame the dull thick head that had no fair lady to help him in his need. But, Clara, I had something more material to say to you—something indeed of the last importance.'

'What is it?' said Clara, in a tone of voice approaching to a scream—'In the name of God, what is it? You know not how you terrify me!'

'Nay, you start at a shadow, Clara,' answered her brother. 'It is no such uncommon matter neither—good faith, it is the most common distress in the world, so far as I know the world—I am sorely pinched for money.'

'Is that all?' replied Clara, in a tone which seemed to her brother as much to underrate the difficulty, when it was explained, as her fears had exaggerated it before she heard its nature.

'Is that all? Indeed it is all, and comprehends a great deal of vexation. I shall be hard run unless I can get a certain sum of money—and I must e'en ask you if you can help me?'

'Help you?' replied Clara; 'Yes, with all my heart—but you know my purse is a light one—more than half of my last dividend is in it, however, and I am sure, John, I shall be happy if it can serve you—especially as that will at least show that your wants are but small ones.'

'Alas, Clara, if you would help me,' said her brother, half repentant of his purpose, 'you must draw the neck of the goose which lays the golden eggs—you must lend me the whole stock.'

'And why not, John,' said the simple-hearted girl, 'if it will do you a kindness? Are you not my natural guardian? Are you not a kind one? And is not my little fortune entirely at your disposal? You will, I am sure, do all for the best.'

'I fear I may not,' said Mowbray, starting from her, and more distressed by her sudden and unsuspicious compliance, than he would have been by difficulties, or remonstrance. In the latter case, he would have stifled the pangs of conscience amid the manœuvres which he must have resorted to for obtaining her acquiescence; as matters stood, there was all the difference between slaughtering a tame and unresisting animal, and pursuing wild game

until the animation of the sportsman's exertions overcomes the internal sense of his own cruelty. The same idea occurred to Mowbray himself.

'By G—,' he said, 'this is like shooting the bird sitting. Clara,' he added, 'I fear this money will scarce be employed as you would wish.'

'Employ it as you yourself please, my dearest brother,' she replied, 'and I will believe it is all for the best.'

'Nay, I am doing for the best,' he replied; 'at least, I am doing what must be done, for I see no other way through it—so all you have to do is to copy this paper, and bid adieu to bank dividends—for a little while at least. I trust soon to double this little matter for you, if Fortune will but stand my friend.'

'Do not trust to Fortune, John,' said Clara, smiling, though with an expression of deep melancholy. 'Alas! she has never been a friend to our family—not at least for many a day.'

'She favours the bold, say my old grammatical exercises,' answered her brother; 'and I must trust her, were she as changeable as a weathercock. And yet—if she should jilt me! What will you do—what will you say, Clara, if I am unable, contrary to my hope, trust, and expectation, to repay you this money within a short time?'

'Do!' replied Clara; 'I must do without it, you know; and for saying, I will not say a word.'

'True,' replied Mowbray, 'but your little expenses—your charities—your halt and blind—your round of paupers?'

'Well, I can manage all that too. Look you here, John, how many half-worked trifles there are. The needle or the pencil is the resource of all distressed heroines, you know; and I promise you, though I have been a little idle and unsettled of late, yet, when I do set about it, no Emmeline or Etheline of them all ever sent such loads of trumpery to market as I shall, or made such wealth as I will do. I dare say Lady Penelope, and all the gentry at the Well, will purchase, and will raffle, and do all sorts of things to encourage the pensive performer. I will send them such lots of landscapes with sap-green trees, and mazareen-blue rivers, and portraits that will terrify the originals themselves—and handkerchiefs and turbans, with needlework

scalloped exactly like the walks on the Belvedere—Why, I shall become a little fortune in the first season.'

'No, Clara,' said John gravely, for a virtuous resolution had gained the upper hand in his bosom, while his sister ran on in this manner. 'We will do something better than all this. If this kind help of yours does not fetch me through, I am determined I will cut the whole concern. It is but standing a laugh or two, and hearing a gay fellow say, Damme, Jack, are you turned clodhopper at last?—that is the worst. Dogs, horses, and all, shall go to the hammer; we will keep nothing but your pony, and I will trust to a pair of excellent legs. There is enough left of the old acres to keep us in the way you like best, and that I will learn to like. I will work in the garden, and work in the forest, mark my own trees, and cut them myself, keep my own accounts, and send Saunders Meiklewham to the devil.'

'That last is the best resolution of all, John,' said Clara; 'and if such a day should come round, I should be the happiest of living creatures—I should not have a grief left in the world—if I had, you should never see or hear of it—it should lie here,' she said, pressing her hand on her bosom, 'buried as deep as a funeral urn in a cold sepulchre. Oh! could we not begin such a life to-morrow? If it is absolutely necessary that this trifle of money should be got rid of first, throw it into the river, and think you have lost it amongst gamblers and horse-jockeys.'

Clara's eyes, which she fondly fixed on her brother's face, glowed through the tears which her enthusiasm called into them, while she thus addressed him. Mowbray, on his part, kept his looks fixed on the ground, with a flush on his cheek, that expressed at once false pride and real shame.

At length he looked up: 'My dear girl,' he said, 'how foolishly you talk, and how foolishly I, that have twenty things to do, stand here listening to you! All will go smooth on *my* plan—if it should not, we have yours in reserve, and I swear to you I will adopt it. The trifle which this letter of yours enables me to command, may have luck in it, and we must not throw up the cards while we have a chance of the game. Were I to cut from this moment, these few hundreds would make us little better or little

worse—so you see we have two strings to our bow. Luck is sometimes against me, that is true—but upon true principle, and playing on the square, I can manage the best of them, or my name is not Mowbray. Adieu, my dearest Clara.' So saying, he kissed her cheek with a more than usual degree of affection.

Ere he could raise himself from his stooping posture, she threw her arm kindly over his neck, and said with a tone of the deepest interest, 'My dearest brother, your slightest wish has been, and ever shall be, a law to me—Oh! if you would but grant me one request in return!'

'What is it, you silly girl?' said Mowbray, gently disengaging himself from her hold. 'What is it you can have to ask that needs such a solemn preface? Remember, I hate prefaces; and when I happen to open a book, always skip them.'

'Without preface, then, my dearest brother, will you, for my sake, avoid those quarrels in which the people yonder are eternally engaged? I never go down there but I hear of some new brawl; and I never lay my head down to sleep, but I dream that you are the victim of it. Even last night'——

'Nay, Clara, if you begin to tell your dreams, we shall never have done. Sleeping, to be sure, is the most serious employment of your life—for as to eating, you hardly match a sparrow; but I entreat you to sleep without dreaming, or to keep your visions to yourself. Why do you keep such fast hold of me? What on earth can you be afraid of? Surely you do not think the blockhead Binks, or any other of the good folks below yonder, dared to turn on me? Egad, I wish they would pluck up a little mettle, that I might have an excuse for drilling them. Gad, I would soon teach them to follow at heel.'

'No, John,' replied his sister; 'it is not of such men as these that I have any fear—and yet, cowards are sometimes driven to desperation, and become more dangerous than better men—but it is not such as these that I fear. But there are men in the world whose qualities are beyond their seeming—whose spirit and courage lie hidden, like metals in the mine, under an unmarked or a plain exterior. You may meet with such—you are rash and headlong, and apt

to exercise your wit without always weighing consequences, and thus '——

'On my word, Clara,' answered Mowbray, 'you are in a most sermonizing humour this morning! the parson himself could not have been more logical or profound. You have only to divide your discourse into heads, and garnish it with conclusions for use, and conclusions for doctrine, and it might be preached before a whole presbytery, with every chance of instruction and edification. But I am a man of the world, my little Clara; and though I wish to go in death's way as little as possible, I must not fear the raw-head and bloody-bones neither. And who the devil is to put the question to me? I must know that, Clara, for you have some especial person in your eye when you bid me take care of quarrelling.'

Clara could not become paler than was her usual complexion; but her voice faltered as she eagerly assured her brother, that she had no particular person in her thoughts.

'Clara,' said her brother, 'do you remember, when there was a report of a bogle [1] in the upper orchard, when we were both children? Do you remember how you were perpetually telling me to take care of the bogle, and keep away from its haunts? And do you remember my going on purpose to detect the bogle, finding the cow-boy, with a shirt about him, busied in pulling pears, and treating him to a handsome drubbing? I am the same Jack Mowbray still, as ready to face danger, and unmask imposition; and your fears, Clara, will only make me watch more closely, till I find out the real object of them. If you warn me of quarrelling with some one, it must be because you know some one who is not unlikely to quarrel with me. You are a flighty and fanciful girl, but you have sense enough not to trouble either yourself or me on a point of honour, save when there is some good reason for it.'

Clara once more protested, and it was with the deepest anxiety to be believed, that what she had said arose only out of the general consequences which she apprehended from the line of conduct her brother had adopted, and which, in her apprehension, was so likely to engage him in the broils

[1] Bogle—in English, Goblin.

that divided the good company at the Spring. Mowbray listened to her explanation with an air of doubt, or rather incredulity, sipped a cup of tea which had for some time been placed before him; and at length replied, 'Well, Clara, whether I am right or wrong in my guess, it would be cruel to torment you any more, remembering what you have just done for me. But do justice to your brother, and believe, that when you have anything to ask of him, an explicit declaration of your wishes will answer your purpose much better than any ingenious oblique attempts to influence me. Give up all thoughts of such, my dear Clara—you are but a poor manœuvrer, but were you the very Machiavel of your sex, you should not turn the flank of John Mowbray.'

He left the room as he spoke, and did not return, though his sister twice called upon him. It is true that she uttered the word 'brother' so faintly, that perhaps the sound did not reach his ears. 'He is gone,' she said, 'and I have had no power to speak out! I am like the wretched creatures, who, it is said, lie under a potent charm, that prevents them alike from shedding tears and from confessing their crimes—Yes, there is a spell on this unhappy heart, and either that must be dissolved, or this must break.'

CHAPTER XII

THE CHALLENGE

A slight note I have about me, for the delivery of which you must excuse me. It is an office which friendship calls upon me to do, and no way offensive to you, as I desire nothing but right on both sides.

King and No King.

THE intelligent reader may recollect that Tyrrel departed from the Fox Hotel on terms not altogether so friendly towards the company as those under which he entered it. Indeed, it occurred to him that he might probably have heard something further on the subject, though, amidst matters of deeper and more anxious consideration, the idea only passed hastily through his mind; and two days having gone over without any message from Sir Bingo Binks, the whole affair glided entirely out of his memory.

The truth was, that although never old woman took more trouble to collect and blow up with her bellows the embers of her decayed fire than Captain MacTurk kindly underwent for the purpose of puffing into a flame the dying sparkles of the baronet's courage, yet two days were spent in fruitless conferences before he could attain the desired point. He found Sir Bingo on these different occasions in all sorts of different moods of mind, and disposed to view the thing in all shades of light, except what the captain thought was the true one. He was in a drunken humour—in a sullen humour—in a thoughtless and vilipending humour—in every humour but a fighting one. And when Captain MacTurk talked of the reputation of the company at the Well, Sir Bingo pretended to take offence, said the company might go to the devil, and hinted that he 'did them sufficient honour by gracing them with his countenance, but did not mean to constitute them any judges of his affairs. The fellow was a raff, and he would have nothing to do with him.'

Captain MacTurk would willingly have taken measures against the baronet himself, as in a state of contumacy, but was opposed by Winterblossom and other members of the committee, who considered Sir Bingo as too important and illustrious a member of their society to be rashly expelled from a place not honoured by the residence of many persons of rank; and finally insisted that nothing should be done in the matter without the advice of Mowbray, whose preparations for his solemn festival on the following Thursday had so much occupied him, that he had not lately appeared at the Well.

In the meanwhile, the gallant captain seemed to experience as much distress of mind as if some stain had lain on his own most unblemished of reputations. He went up and down upon the points of his toes, rising up on his instep with a jerk which at once expressed vexation and defiance—He carried his nose turned up in the air, like that of a pig when he snuffs the approaching storm—He spoke in monosyllables when he spoke at all; and—what perhaps illustrated in the strongest manner the depth of his feelings—he refused, in face of the whole company, to pledge Sir Bingo in a glass of the baronet's peculiar cognac.

At length, the whole Well was alarmed by the report brought by a smart outrider, that the young Earl of Etherington, reported to be rising on the horizon of fashion as a star of the first magnitude, intended to pass an hour, or a day, or a week, as it might happen (for his lordship could not be supposed to know his own mind), at Saint Ronan's Well.

This suddenly put all in motion. Almanacs were opened to ascertain his lordship's age, inquiries were made concerning the extent of his fortune, his habits were quoted, his tastes were guessed at, and all that the ingenuity of the managing committee could devise was resorted to, in order to recommend their Spa to this favourite of fortune. An express was dispatched to Shaws Castle with the agreeable intelligence which fired the train of hope that led to Mowbray's appropriation of his sister's capital. He did not, however, think proper to obey the summons to the Spring; for, not being aware in what light the earl might regard the worthies there assembled, he did not desire to be found by his lordship in any strict connexion with them.

Sir Bingo Binks was in a different situation. The bravery with which he had endured the censure of the place began to give way, when he considered that a person of such distinction as that which public opinion attached to Lord Etherington, should find him bodily indeed at Saint Ronan's, but, so far as society was concerned, on the road towards the ancient city of Coventry; and his banishment thither, incurred by that most unpardonable offence in modern morality, a solecism in the code of honour. Though sluggish and inert when called to action, the baronet was by no means an absolute coward; or, if so, he was of that class which fights when reduced to extremity. He manfully sent for Captain MacTurk, who waited upon him with a grave solemnity of aspect, which instantly was exchanged for a radiant joy, when Sir Bingo, in few words, empowered him to carry a message to that d—d strolling artist, by whom he had been insulted three days since.

'By Cot,' said the captain, 'my exceedingly goot and excellent friend, and I am happy to do such a favour for you! and it 's well you have thought of it yourself; because, if it had not been for some of our very goot and excellent

friends, that would be putting their spoon into another folk's dish, I should have been asking you a civil question myself, how you came to dine with us, with all that mud and mire which Mr. Tyrrel's grasp has left upon the collar of your coat—you understand me. But it is much better as it is, and I will go to the man with all the speed of light; and though, to be sure, it should have been sooner thought of, yet let me alone to make an excuse for that, just in my own civil way—better late thrive than never do well, you know, Sir Bingo; and if you have made him wait a little while for his morning, you must give him the better measure, my darling.'

So saying, he awaited no reply, lest peradventure the commission with which he was so hastily and unexpectedly charged, should have been clogged with some condition of compromise. No such proposal, however, was made on the part of the doughty Sir Bingo, who eyed his friend as he hastily snatched up his rattan to depart, with a dogged look of obstinacy, expressive, to use his own phrase, of a determined resolution to come up to the scratch; and when he heard the captain's parting footsteps, and saw the door shut behind him, he valiantly whistled a few bars of 'Jenny Sutton', in token he cared not a farthing how the matter was to end.

With a swifter pace than his half-pay leisure usually encouraged, or than his habitual dignity permitted, Captain MacTurk cleared the ground betwixt the Spring and its gay vicinity, and the ruins of the Aultoun, where reigned our friend Meg Dods, the sole assertor of its ancient dignities. To the door of the Cleikum Inn the captain addressed himself, as one too much accustomed to war to fear a rough reception; although at the very first aspect of Meg, who presented her person at the half-opened door, his military experience taught him that his entrance into the place would, in all probability, be disputed.

'Is Mr. Tyrrel at home?' was the question; and the answer was conveyed by the counter-interrogation, 'Wha may ye be that speers?'

As the most polite reply to this question, and an indulgence, at the same time, of his own taciturn disposition, the captain presented to Luckie Dods the fifth part of an

ordinary playing card, much grimed with snuff, which bore on its blank side his name and quality. But Luckie Dods rejected the information thus tendered, with contemptuous scorn.

'Nane of your deil's play-books for me,' said she; 'it 's an ill world since sic prick-my-dainty doings came in fashion—It 's a poor tongue that canna tell its ain name, and I'll hae nane of your scarts upon pasteboard.'

'I am Captain MacTurk, of the —— regiment,' said the captain, disdaining further answer.

'MacTurk?' repeated Meg, with an emphasis, which induced the owner of the name to reply, 'Yes, honest woman—MacTurk—Hector MacTurk—have you any objections to my name, good wife?'

'Nae objections have I,' answered Meg; 'it 's e'en an excellent name for a heathen.—But, Captain MacTurk, since sae it be that ye are a captain, ye may e'en face about and march your ways hame again, to the tune of Dumbarton drums; for ye are ganging to have nae speech of Maister Tirl, or ony lodger of mine.'

'And wherefore not?' demanded the veteran; 'and is this of your own foolish head, honest woman, or has your lodger left such orders?'

'Maybe he has and maybe no,' answered Meg sturdily; 'and I ken nae mair right that ye suld ca' me honest woman, than I have to ca' you honest man, whilk is as far frae my thoughts as it wad be from heaven's truth.'

'The woman is deleerit!' said Captain MacTurk; 'but coom, coom—a gentleman is not to be misused in this way when he comes on a gentleman's business; so make you a bit room on the doorstane, that I may pass by you, or I will make room for myself, by Cot, to your small pleasure.'

And so saying, he assumed the air of a man who was about to make good his passage. But Meg, without deigning further reply, flourished around her head the hearth-broom, which she had been employing to its more legitimate purpose, when disturbed in her housewifery by Captain MacTurk.

'I ken your errand weel eneugh, captain—and I ken yersell. Ye are ane of the folk that gang about yonder setting folks by the lugs, as callants set their collies to

fight. But ye sall come to nae lodger o' mine, let a-be Maister Tirl, wi' ony sic ungodly errand ; for I am ane that will keep God's peace and the king's within my dwelling.'

So saying, and in explicit token of her peaceable intentions, she again flourished her broom.

The veteran instinctively threw himself under St. George's guard, and drew two paces back, exclaiming, ' That the woman was either mad, or as drunk as whisky could make her ; ' an alternative which afforded Meg so little satisfaction, that she fairly rushed on her retiring adversary, and began to use her weapon to fell purpose.

' Me drunk, ye scandalous blackguard ! ' (a blow with the broom interposed as parenthesis) ' me, that am fasting from all but sin and bohea ! ' (Another whack.)

The captain, swearing, exclaiming, and parrying, caught the blows as they fell, showing much dexterity in single-stick. The people began to gather ; and how long his gallantry might have maintained itself against the spirit of self-defence and revenge, must be left uncertain, for the arrival of Tyrrel, returned from a short walk, put a period to the contest.

Meg, who had a great respect for her guest, began to feel ashamed of her own violence, and slunk into the house ; observing, however, that she trowed she had made her hearth-broom and the auld heathen's pow right weel acquainted. The tranquillity which ensued upon her departure gave Tyrrel an opportunity to ask the captain, whom he at length recognized, the meaning of this singular affray, and whether the visit was intended for him ; to which the veteran replied very discomposedly, that ' he should have known that long enough ago, if he had had decent people to open his door, and answer a civil question, instead of a flyting madwoman, who was worse than an eagle,' he said, ' or a mastiff-bitch, or a she-bear, or any other female beast in the creation.'

Half suspecting his errand, and desirous to avoid unnecessary notoriety, Tyrrel, as he showed the captain to the parlour, which he called his own, entreated him to excuse the rudeness of his landlady, and to pass from the topic to that which had procured him the honour of this visit.

' And you are right, my good Master Tyrrel,' said the

CAPTAIN MACTURK AND MEG DODS

captain, pulling down the sleeves of his coat, adjusting his handkerchief and breast-ruffle, and endeavouring to recover the composure of manner becoming his mission, but still adverting indignantly to the usage he had received—'By ——, if she had but been a man, if it were the king himself—However, Mr. Tyrrel, I am come on a civil errand—and very civilly I have been treated—the auld bitch should be set in the stocks, and be tamned! My friend, Sir Bingo—By ——, I shall never forget that woman's insolence—if there be a constable or a cat-o'-nine tails within ten miles '——

'I perceive, captain,' said Tyrrel, 'that you are too much disturbed at this moment to enter upon the business which has brought you here—if you will step into my bedroom, and make use of some cold water and a towel, it will give you the time to compose yourself a little.'

'I shall do no such thing, Mr. Tyrrel,' answered the captain snappishly; 'I do not want to be composed at all, and I do not want to stay in this house a minute longer than to do my errand to you on my friend's behalf—And as for this tamned woman, Dods '——

'You will in that case forgive my interrupting you, Captain MacTurk, as I presume your errand to me can have no reference to this strange quarrel with my landlady, with which I have nothing to '——

'And if I thought that it had, sir,' said the captain, interrupting Tyrrel in his turn, 'you should have given me satisfaction before you was a quarter of an hour older—Oh, I would give five pounds to the pretty fellow that would say, Captain MacTurk, the woman did right!'

'I certainly will not be that person you wish for, captain,' replied Tyrrel, 'because I really do not know who was in the right or wrong; but I am certainly sorry that you should have met with ill usage, when your purpose was to visit me.'

'Well, sir, if you are concerned,' said the man of peace snappishly, 'so am I, and there is an end of it. And touching my errand to you—you cannot have forgotten that you treated my friend, Sir Bingo Binks, with singular incivility?'

'I recollect nothing of the kind, captain,' replied Tyrrel. 'I remember that the gentleman, so called, took some uncivil liberties in laying foolish bets concerning me, and

that I treated him, from respect to the rest of the company, and the ladies in particular, with a great degree of moderation and forbearance.'

'And you must have very fine ideas of forbearance,' replied the captain, 'when you took my good friend by the collar of the coat, and lifted him out of your way as if he had been a puppy dog! My good Mr. Tyrrel, I can assure you he does not think that you have forborne him at all, and he has no purpose to forbear you; and I must either carry back a sufficient apology, or you must meet in a quiet way, with a good friend on each side. And this was the errand I came on, when this tamned woman, with the hearth-broom, who is an enemy to all quiet and peaceable proceedings'——

'We will forget Mrs. Dods for the present, if you please, Captain MacTurk,' said Tyrrel—'and, to speak to the present subject, you will permit me to say, that I think this summons comes a little of the latest. You know best as a military man, but I have always understood that such differences are usually settled immediately after they occur—not that I intend to balk Sir Bingo's inclinations upon the score of delay, or any other account.'

'I dare say you will not—I dare say you will not, Mr. Tyrrel,' answered the captain—'I am free to think that you know better what belongs to a gentleman. And as to time—look you, my good sir, there are different sorts of people in this world, as there are different sorts of fire-arms. There are your hair-triggered rifles, that go off just at the right moment, and in the twinkling of an eye, and that, Mr. Tyrrel, is your true man of honour;—and there is a sort of person that takes a thing up too soon, and sometimes backs out of it, like your rubbishy Birmingham pieces, that will at one time go off at half-cock, and at another time burn priming without going off at all;—then again there are pieces that hang fire—or I should rather say, that are like the matchlocks which the black fellows use in the East Indies—there must be some blowing of the match, and so forth, which occasions delay, but the piece carries true enough after all.'

'And your friend Sir Bingo's valour is of this last kind, captain—I presume that is the inference. I should have

thought it more like a boy's cannon, which is fired by means of a train, and is but a pop-gun after all.'

'I cannot allow of such comparisons, sir,' said the captain; 'you will understand that I come here as Sir Bingo's friend, and a reflection on him will be an affront to me.'

'I disclaim all intended offence to you, captain—I have no wish to extend the number of my adversaries, or to add to them the name of a gallant officer like yourself,' replied Tyrrel.

'You are too obliging, sir,' said the captain, drawing himself up with dignity. 'By ——, and that was said very handsomely! Well, sir, and shall I not have the pleasure of carrying back any explanation from you to Sir Bingo? I assure you it would give me pleasure to make this matter handsomely up.'

'To Sir Bingo, Captain MacTurk, I have no apology to offer—I think I treated him more gently than his impertinence deserved.'

'Och, och!' sighed the captain, with a strong Highland intonation; 'then there is no more to be said, but just to settle time and place; for pistols, I suppose, must be the weapons.'

'All these matters are quite the same to me,' said Tyrrel; 'only, in respect of time, I should wish it to be as speedy as possible—What say you to one, afternoon, this very day? You may name the place.'

'At one, afternoon,' replied the captain deliberately, 'Sir Bingo will attend you—the place may be the Buckstane; for as the whole company go to the water-side to-day to eat a kettle of fish,[n] there will be no risk of interruption. And whom shall I speak to, my good friend, on your side of the quarrel?'

'Really, captain,' replied Tyrrel, 'that is a puzzling question—I have no friend here—I suppose you could hardly act for both?'

'It would be totally, absolutely, and altogether out of the question, my good friend,' replied MacTurk. 'But if you will trust to me, I will bring up a friend on your part from the Well, who, though you have hardly seen him before, will settle matters for you as well as if you had been intimate for twenty years—and I will bring up the doctor too, if

I can get him unloosed from the petticoat of that fat widow Blower, that he has strung himself upon.'

'I have no doubt you will do everything with perfect accuracy, captain. At one o'clock, then, we meet at the Buck-stane—Stay, permit me to see you to the door.'

'By ——, and it is not altogether so unnecessary,' said the captain; 'for the tamned woman with the besom might have some advantage in that long dark passage, knowing the ground better than I do—tamn her, I will have amends on her, if there be whipping-post, or ducking-stool, or a pair of stocks in the parish!' And so saying, the captain trudged off, his spirits ever and anon agitated by recollection of the causeless aggression of Meg Dods, and again composed to a state of happy serenity by the recollection of the agreeable arrangement which he had made between Mr. Tyrrel and his friend Sir Bingo Binks.

We have heard of men of undoubted benevolence of character and disposition, whose principal delight was to see a miserable criminal, degraded alike by his previous crimes, and the sentence which he had incurred, conclude a vicious and wretched life by an ignominious and painful death. It was some such inconsistency of character which induced honest Captain MacTurk, who had really been a meritorious officer, and was a good-natured, honourable, and well-intentioned man, to place his chief delight in setting his friends by the ears, and then acting as umpire in the dangerous rencontres, which, according to his code of honour, were absolutely necessary to restore peace and cordiality. We leave the explanation of such anomalies to the labours of craniologists, for they seem to defy all the researches of the ethic philosopher.

CHAPTER XIII

DISAPPOINTMENT

Evans. I pray you now, good Master Slender's serving-man, and friend Simple by your name, which way have you looked for Master Caius ?

Slender. Marry, sir, the city-ward, the park-ward, every way ; old Windsor way, and every way.—*The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Sir Bingo Binks received the captain's communication with the same dogged sullenness he had displayed at sending the challenge ; a most ungracious *humph*, ascending, as it were, from the very bottom of his stomach, through the folds of a Belcher handkerchief, intimating his acquiescence, in a tone nearly as gracious as that with which the drowsy traveller acknowledges the intimation of the slip-shod ostler, that it is on the stroke of five, and the horn will sound in a minute. Captain MacTurk by no means considered this ejaculation as expressing a proper estimate of his own trouble and services. 'Humph!' he replied ; 'and what does that mean, Sir Bingo ? Have not I here had the trouble to put you just into the neat road ; and would you have been able to make a handsome affair out of it at all, after you had let it hang so long in the wind, if I had not taken on myself to make it agreeable to the gentleman, and cooked as neat a mess out of it as I have seen a Frenchman do out of a stale sprat ? '

Sir Bingo saw it was necessary to mutter some intimation of acquiescence and acknowledgement, which, however inarticulate, was sufficient to satisfy the veteran to whom the adjustment of a personal affair of this kind was a labour of love, and who now, kindly mindful of his promise to Tyrrel, hurried away as if he had been about the most charitable action upon earth, to secure the attendance of some one as a witness on the stranger's part.

Mr. Winterblossom was the person whom MacTurk had in his own mind pitched upon as the fittest person to perform this act of benevolence, and he lost no time in communicating his wish to that worthy gentleman. But

Mr. Winterblossom, though a man of the world, and well enough acquainted with such matters, was by no means so passionately addicted to them as was the man of peace, Captain Hector MacTurk. As a bon-vivant, he hated trouble of any kind, and the shrewd selfishness of his disposition enabled him to foresee that a good deal might accrue to all concerned in the course of this business. He, therefore, coolly replied, that he knew nothing of Mr. Tyrrel —not even whether he was a gentleman or not; and besides, he had received no regular application in his behalf—he did not, therefore, feel himself at all inclined to go to the field as his second. This refusal drove the poor captain to despair. He conjured his friend to be more public-spirited, and entreated him to consider the reputation of the Well, which was to them as a common country, and the honour of the company to which they both belonged, and of which Mr. Winterblossom was in a manner the proper representative, as being, with consent of all, the perpetual president. He reminded him how many quarrels had been nightly undertaken and departed from on the ensuing morning, without any suitable consequences—said 'that people began to talk of the place oddly; and that, for his own part, he found his own honour so nearly touched, that he had begun to think he himself would be obliged to bring somebody or other to account for the general credit of the Well; and now, just when the most beautiful occasion had arisen to put everything on a handsome footing, it was hard—it was cruel—it was most unjustifiable—in Mr. Winterblossom, to decline so simple a matter as was requested of him.'

Dry and taciturn as the captain was on all ordinary occasions, he proved, on the present, eloquent and almost pathetic; for the tears came into his eyes when he recounted the various quarrels which had become addled, notwithstanding his best endeavours to hatch them into an honourable meeting; and here was one, at length, just chipping the shell, like to be smothered for want of the most ordinary concession on the part of Winterblossom. In short, that gentleman could not hold out any longer. 'It was,' he said, 'a very foolish business, he thought; but to oblige Sir Bingo and Captain MacTurk, he had no

objection to walk with them about noon as far as the Buckstane, although he must observe the day was hazy, and he had felt a prophetic twinge or two, which looked like a visit of his old acquaintance podagra.'

'Never mind that, my excellent friend,' said the captain, 'a sup out of Sir Bingo's flask is like enough to put that to rights; and by my soul, it is not the thing he is like to leave behind him on this sort of occasion, unless I be far mistaken in my man.'

'But,' said Winterblossom, 'although I comply with your wishes thus far, Captain MacTurk, I by no means undertake for certain to back this same Master Tyrrel, of whom I know nothing at all, but only agree to go to the place in hopes of preventing mischief.'

'Never fash your beard about that, Mr. Winterblossom,' replied the captain; 'for a little mischief, as you call it, is become a thing absolutely necessary to the credit of the place; and I am sure, whatever be the consequences, they cannot in the present instance be very fatal to anybody; for here is a young fellow that, if he should have a misfortune, nobody will miss, for nobody knows him; then there is Sir Bingo, whom everybody knows so well, that they will miss him all the less.'

'And there will be Lady Bingo, a wealthy and handsome young widow,' said Winterblossom, throwing his hat upon his head with the grace and pretension of former days, and sighing to see, as he looked in the mirror, how much time, that had whitened his hair, rounded his stomach, wrinkled his brow, and bent down his shoulders, had disqualified him, as he expressed it, 'for entering for such a plate.'

Secure of Winterblossom, the captain's next anxiety was to obtain the presence of Dr. Quackleben, who, although he wrote himself M.D., did not by any means decline practice as a surgeon when any job offered for which he was likely to be well paid, as was warranted in the present instance, the wealthy baronet being a party principally concerned. The doctor, therefore, like the eagle scenting the carnage, seized, at the first word, the huge volume of morocco leather which formed his case of portable instruments, and uncoiled before the captain, with ostentatious display, its formidable and glittering contents, upon which

he began to lecture as upon a copious and interesting text, until the man of war thought it necessary to give him a word of caution.

'Och,' says he, 'I do pray you, doctor, to carry that packet of yours under the breast of your coat, or in your pocket, or somewhere out of sight, and by no means to produce or open it before the parties. For although scalpels, and tourniquets, and pincers, and the like, are very ingenious implements, and pretty to behold, and are also useful when time and occasion call for them, yet I have known the sight of them take away a man's fighting stomach, and so lose their owner a job, Dr. Quackleben.'

'By my faith, Captain MacTurk,' said the doctor, 'you speak as if you were graduated! I have known these treacherous articles play their master many a cursed trick. The very sight of my forceps, without the least effort on my part, once cured an inveterate toothache of three days' duration, prevented the extraction of a carious molendinar, which it was the very end of their formation to achieve, and sent me home minus a guinea. But hand me that great-coat, captain, and we will place the instruments in ambuscade, until they are called into action in due time. I should think something will happen—Sir Bingo is a sure shot at a moor-cock.'

'Cannot say,' replied MacTurk; 'I have known the pistol shake many a hand that held the fowling-piece fast enough. Yonder Tyrrel looks like a teevilish cool customer—I watched him the whole time I was delivering my errand, and I can promise you he is mettle to the back-bone.'

'Well—I will have my bandages ready *secundum artem*,' replied the man of medicine 'We must guard against haemorrhage—Sir Bingo is a plethoric subject. One o'clock, you say—at the Buck-stane—I will be punctual.'

'Will you not walk with us?' said Captain MacTurk, who seemed willing to keep his whole convoy together on this occasion, lest, peradventure, any of them had fled from under his patronage.

'No,' replied the doctor, 'I must first make an apology to worthy Mrs. Blower, for I had promised her my arm down to the river-side, where they are all to eat a kettle of fish.'

'By Cot, and I hope we shall make them a prettier kettle of fish than was ever seen at Saint Ronan's,' said the captain, rubbing his hands.

'Don't say *we*, captain,' replied the cautious doctor; 'I for one have nothing to do with the meeting—wash my hands of it. No, no, I cannot afford to be clapped up as accessory. You ask me to meet you at the Buck-stane—no purpose assigned—I am willing to oblige my worthy friend, Captain MacTurk—walk that way, thinking of nothing particular—hear the report of pistols—hasten to the spot—fortunately just in time to prevent the most fatal consequences—chance most opportunely to have my case of instruments with me, indeed, generally walk with them about me—*nunquam non paratus*—then give my professional definition of the wound and state of the patient. That is the way to give evidence, captain, before sheriffs, coroners, and such sort of folks—never commit oneself—it is a rule of our profession.'

'Well, well, doctor,' answered the captain, 'you know your own ways best; and so you are but there to give a chance of help in case of accident, all the laws of honour will be fully complied with. But it would be a foul reflection upon me, as a man of honour, if I did not take care that there should be somebody to come in thirdsman between death and my principal.'

At the awful hour of one, afternoon, there arrived upon the appointed spot Captain MacTurk, leading to the field the valorous Sir Bingo, not exactly straining like a greyhound in the slips, but rather looking moody like a butcher's bulldog, which knows he must fight since his master bids him. Yet the baronet showed no outward flinching or abatement of courage, excepting that the tune of 'Jenny Sutton', which he had whistled without intermission since he left the hotel, had, during the last half mile of their walk, sunk into silence; although, to look at the muscles of the mouth, projection of the lip, and vacancy of the eye, it seemed as if the notes were still passing through his mind, and that he whistled 'Jenny Sutton' in his imagination. Mr. Winterblossom came two minutes after this happy pair, and the doctor was equally punctual.

'Upon my soul,' said the former, 'this is a mighty silly

affair, Sir Bingo, and might, I think, be easily taken up, at less risk to all parties than a meeting of this kind. You should recollect, Sir Bingo, that you have much depending on your life—you are a married man, Sir Bingo.'

Sir Bingo turned the quid in his mouth, and squirted out the juice in a most coachman-like manner.

'Mr. Winterblossom,' said the captain, 'Sir Bingo has in this matter put himself in my hands, and unless you think yourself more able to direct his course than I am, I must frankly tell you that I will be disobliged by your interference. You may speak to your own friend as much as you please; and if you find yourself authorized to make any proposal, I shall be desirous to lend an ear to it on the part of my worthy principal, Sir Bingo. But I will be plain with you, that I do not greatly approve of settlements upon the field, though I hope I am a quiet and peaceable man; yet here is our honour to be looked after in the first place; and moreover, I must insist that every proposal for accommodation shall originate with your party or yourself.'

'*My* party?' answered Winterblossom; 'why really, though I came hither at your request, Captain MacTurk, yet I must see more of the matter ere I can fairly pronounce myself second to a man I never saw but once.'

'And, perhaps, may never see again,' said the doctor, looking at his watch; 'for it is ten minutes past the hour, and here is no Mr. Tyrrel.'

'Hey! what 's that you say, doctor?' said the baronet, awakened from his apathy.

'He speaks tamned nonsense,' said the captain, pulling out a huge, old-fashioned, turnip-shaped implement, with a blackened silver dial-plate. 'It is not above three minutes after one by the true time, and I will uphold Mr. Tyrrel to be a man of his word—never saw a man take a thing more coolly.'

'Not more coolly than he takes his walk this way,' said the doctor; 'for the hour is as I tell you—remember, I am professional—have pulses to count by the second and half-second—my timepiece must go as true as the sun.'

'And I have mounted guard a thousand times by my watch,' said the captain; 'and I defy the devil to say that Hector MacTurk did not always discharge his duty to the

twentieth part of the fraction of a second—it was my great grandmother, Lady Killbracklin's, and I will maintain its reputation against any timepiece that ever went upon wheels.'

'Well then, look at your own watch, captain,' said Winterblossom, 'for time stands still with no man, and while we speak the hour advances. On my word, I think this Mr. Tyrrel intends to humbug us.'

'Hey! what 's that you say?' said Sir Bingo, once more starting from his sullen reverie.

'I shall not look at my watch upon no such matter,' said the captain; 'nor will I any way be disposed to doubt your friend's honour, Mr. Winterblossom.'

'*My* friend?' said Mr. Winterblossom; 'I must tell you once more, captain, that this Mr. Tyrrel is no friend of mine—none in the world. He is your friend, Captain MacTurk; and I own, if he keeps us waiting much longer on this occasion, I will be apt to consider his friendship as of very little value.'

'And how dare you then say that the man is my friend?' said the captain, knitting his brows in a most formidable manner.

'Pooh! pooh! captain,' answered Winterblossom, coolly, if not contemptuously—'keep all that for silly boys; I have lived in the world too long either to provoke quarrels, or to care about them. So, reserve your fire; it is all thrown away on such an old cock as I am. But I really wish we knew whether this fellow means to come—twenty minutes past the hour—I think it is odds that you are bilked, Sir Bingo?'

'Bilked! hey!' cried Sir Bingo; 'by Gad, I always thought so—I wagered with Mowbray he was a raff—I am had, by Gad. I'll wait no longer than the half-hour, by Gad, were he a field-marshal.'

'You will be directed in that matter by your friend, if you please, Sir Bingo,' said the captain.

'D—n me if I will,' returned the baronet—'Friend? a pretty friend, to bring me out here on such a fool's errand! I knew the fellow was a raff—but I never thought you, with all your chaff about honour, such a d—d spoon as to bring a message from a fellow who has fled the pit!'

'If you regret so much having come here to no purpose,'

said the captain, in a very lofty tone, 'and if you think I have used you like a spoon, as you say, I will have no objection in life to take Mr. Tyrrel's place, and serve your occasion, my boy!'

'By ——! and if you like it, you may fire away, and welcome,' said Sir Bingo; 'and I'll spin a crown for first shot, for I do not understand being brought here for nothing, d—n me!'

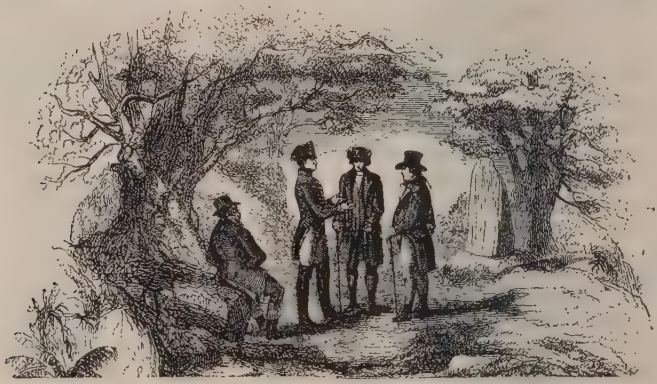
'And there was never man alive so ready as I am to give you something to stay your stomach,' said the irritable Highlander.

'Oh fie, gentlemen! fie, fie, fie!' exclaimed the pacific Mr. Winterblossom—'For shame, captain—Out upon you, Sir Bingo, are you mad?—what, principal and second!—the like was never heard of—never.'

The parties were in some degree recalled to their more cool recollections by this expostulation, yet continued a short quarter-deck walk to and fro, upon parallel lines, looking at each other sullenly as they passed, and bristling like two dogs who have a mind to quarrel, yet hesitate to commence hostilities. During this promenade, also, the perpendicular and erect carriage of the veteran, rising on his toes at every step, formed a whimsical contrast with the heavy loutish shuffle of the bulky baronet, who had, by dint of practice, very nearly attained that most enviable of all carriages, the gait of a shambling Yorkshire ostler. His coarse spirit was now thoroughly kindled, and like iron, or any other baser metal, which is slow in receiving heat, it retained long the smouldering and angry spirit of resentment that had originally brought him to the place, and now rendered him willing to wreak his uncomfortable feelings upon the nearest object which occurred, since the first purpose of his coming thither was frustrated. In his own phrase his pluck was up, and finding himself in a fighting humour, he thought it a pity, like Bob Acres, that so much good courage should be thrown away. As, however, that courage after all consisted chiefly in ill humour; and as, in the demeanour of the captain, he read nothing deferential or deprecatory of his wrath, he began to listen with more attention to the arguments of Mr. Winterblossom, who entreated them not to sully, by private

quarrel, the honour they had that day so happily acquired without either blood or risk.

'It was now,' he said, 'three-quarters of an hour past the time appointed for this person, who calls himself Tyrrel, to meet Sir Bingo Binks. Now, instead of standing squabbling here, which serves no purpose, I propose we should reduce to writing the circumstances which attend this affair for the satisfaction of the company at the Well, and that the memorandum shall be regularly attested by our subscriptions; after which, I shall further humbly



THE DUELLISTS

propose that it be subjected to the revision of the committee of management.'

'I object to any revision of a statement to which my name shall be appended,' said the captain.

'Right—very true, captain,' said the complaisant Mr. Winterblossom; 'undoubtedly you know best, and your signature is completely sufficient to authenticate this transaction—however, as it is the most important which has occured since the Spring was established, I propose we shall all sign the *procès-verbal*, as I may term it.'

'Leave me out, if you please,' said the doctor, not much satisfied that both the original quarrel and the by-battle had passed over without any occasion for the offices of

a Machaon ; 'leave me out, if you please ; for it does not become me to be ostensibly concerned in any proceedings which have had for their object a breach of the peace. And for the importance of waiting here for an hour, in a fine afternoon, it is my opinion there was a more important service done to the Well of Saint Ronan's, when I, Quentin Quackleben, M.D., cured Lady Penelope Penfeather of her seventh attack upon the nerves, attended with febrile symptoms.'

'No disparagement to your skill at all, doctor,' said Mr. Winterblossom ; 'but I conceive the lesson which this fellow has received will be a great means to prevent improper persons from appearing at the Spring hereafter ; and, for my part, I shall move that no one be invited to dine at the table in future till his name is regularly entered as a member of the company, in the lists at the public room. And I hope both Sir Bingo and the captain will receive the thanks of the company, for their spirited conduct in expelling the intruder.—Sir Bingo, will you allow me to apply to your flask—a little twinge I feel, owing to the dampness of the grass.'

Sir Bingo, soothed by the consequence he had acquired, readily imparted to the invalid a thimbleful of his cordial, which, we believe, had been prepared by some cunning chemist in the wilds of Glenlivat. He then filled a bumper, and extended it towards the veteran, as an unequivocal symptom of reconciliation. The real turbinacious flavour no sooner reached the nose of the captain, than the beverage was turned down his throat with symptoms of most unequivocal applause. 'I shall have some hope of the young fellows of this day,' he said, 'now that they begin to give up their Dutch and French distilled waters, and stick to genuine Highland ware. By Cot, it is the only liquor fit for a gentleman to drink in a morning, if he can have the good fortune to come by it, you see.'

'Or after dinner either, captain,' said the doctor, to whom the glass had passed in rotation ; 'it is worth all the wines in France for flavour, and more cordial to the system besides.'

'And now,' said the captain, 'that we may not go off the ground with anything on our stomachs worse than the whisky, I can afford to say (as Captain Hector MacTurk's

character is tolerably well established), that I am sorry for the little difference that has occurred betwixt me and my worthy friend, Sir Bingo, here.'

'And since you are so civil, captain,' said Sir Bingo, 'why, I am sorry too—only it would put the devil out of temper to lose so fine a fishing day—wind south—fine air on the pool—water settled from the flood—just in trim—and I dare say three pairs of hooks have passed over my cast before this time.'

He closed this elaborate lamentation with a libation of the same cordial which he had imparted to his companions; and they returned in a body to the hotel, where the transactions of the morning were soon afterwards announced to the company, by the following programme:—

STATEMENT

'Sir Bingo Binks, Baronet, having found himself aggrieved by the uncivil behaviour of an individual calling himself Francis Tyrrel, now or lately a resident at the Cleikum Inn, Aultoun of Saint Ronan's; and having empowered Captain Hector MacTurk to wait upon the said Mr. Tyrrel to demand an apology, under the alternative of personal satisfaction, according to the laws of honour and the practice of gentlemen, the said Tyrrel voluntarily engaged to meet the said Sir Bingo Binks, Baronet, at the Buck-stane, near Saint Ronan's Burn, upon this present day, being Wednesday —— August. In consequence of which appointment, we, the undersigned, did attend at the place named, from one o'clock till two, without seeing or hearing anything whatever of the said Francis Tyrrel, or anyone in his behalf—which fact we make thus publicly known, that all men, and particularly the distinguished company assembled at the Fox Hotel, may be duly apprised of the character and behaviour of the said Francis Tyrrel, in case of his again presuming to intrude himself into the society of persons of honour.

'The Fox Inn and Hotel, Saint Ronan's Well—August 18—.

(Signed) 'Bingo Binks.
'Hector MacTurk.
'Philip Winterblossom.'

A little lower followed this separate attestation :

'I, Quentin Quackleben, M.D., F.R.S., D.E., B.L., X.Z., &c. &c., being called upon to attest what I know in the said matter, do hereby verify, that, being by accident at the Buck-stane, near Saint Ronan's Burn, on this present day, at the hour of one afternoon, and chancing to remain there for the space of nearly an hour, conversing with Sir Bingo Binks, Captain MacTurk, and Mr. Winterblossom, we did not, during that time, see or hear anything of or from the person calling himself Francis Tyrrel, whose presence at that place seemed to be expected by the gentlemen I have just named.' This *affiche* was dated like the former, and certified under the august hand of Quentin Quackleben, M.D., &c. &c. &c.

Again, and prefaced by the averment that an improper person had been lately introduced into the company of Saint Ronan's Well, there came forth a legislative enactment, on the part of the committee, declaring 'that no one shall in future be invited to the dinners, or balls, or other entertainments of the Well, until their names shall be regularly entered in the books kept for the purpose at the rooms.' Lastly, there was a vote of thanks to Sir Bingo Binks and Captain MacTurk for their spirited conduct, and the pains which they had taken to exclude an improper person from the company at Saint Ronan's Well.

These annunciations speedily became the magnet of the day. All idlers crowded to peruse them ; and it would be endless to notice the 'God bless me's'—the 'Lord have a care of us'—the 'Saw you ever the like's' of gossips, any more than the 'Dear me's' and 'Oh, laa's' of the titupping misses, and the oaths of the pantalooned or buckskined beaux. The character of Sir Bingo rose like the stocks at the news of a dispatch from the Duke of Wellington, and, what was extraordinary, attained some consequence even in the estimation of his lady. All shook their heads at the recollection of the unlucky Tyrrel, and found out much in his manner and address which convinced them that he was but an adventurer and swindler. A few, however, less partial to the committee of management (for whenever there is an administration, there will soon arise an opposition), whispered among themselves that, to give

the fellow his due, the man, be he what he would, had only come among them, like the devil, when he was called for—And honest Dame Blower blessed herself when she heard of such bloodthirsty doings as had been intended, and 'thanked God that honest Doctor Kickherben had come to nae harm amang a' their nonsense.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONSULTATION

Clown.—I hope here be proofs.
Measure for Measure.

The borough of —— lies, as all the world knows, about fourteen miles distant from Saint Ronan's, being the county town of that shire, which, as described in the Tourist's Guide, numbers among its objects of interest that gay and popular watering-place, whose fame, no doubt, will be greatly enhanced by the present annals of its earlier history. As it is at present unnecessary to be more particular concerning the scene of our story, we will fill up the blank left in the first name with the fictitious appellation of Marchthorn, having often found ourselves embarrassed in the course of a story by the occurrence of an ugly hiatus, which we cannot always at first sight fill up with the proper reference to the rest of the narrative.

Marchthorn, then, was an old-fashioned Scottish town, the street of which, on market-day, showed a reasonable number of stout great-coated yeomen, bartering or dealing for the various commodities of their farms; and on other days of the week, only a few forlorn burghers, crawling about like half-awakened flies, and watching the town steeple till the happy sound of twelve strokes from Time's oracles should tell them it was time to take their meridian dram. The narrow windows of the shops intimated very imperfectly the miscellaneous contents of the interior, where every merchant, as the shopkeepers of Marchthorn were termed, *more Scotico*, sold everything that could be thought of. As for manufactures, there were none, except that of

the careful Town Council, who were mightily busied in preparing the warp and woof which, at the end of every five or six years, the town of Marchthorn contributed for the purpose of weaving the fourth or fifth part of a member of Parliament.

In such a town it usually happens that the sheriff-clerk, especially supposing him agent for several lairds of the higher order, is possessed of one of the best-looking houses ; and such was that of Mr. Bindloose. None of the smartness of the brick-built and brass-hammered mansion of a southern attorney appeared indeed in this mansion, which was a tall, thin, grim-looking building, in the centre of the town, with narrow windows and projecting gables, notched into that sort of descent, called crow-steps, and having the lower casements defended by stanchions of iron ; for Mr. Bindloose, as frequently happens, kept a branch of one of the two national banks which had been lately established in the town of Marchthorn.

Towards the door of this tenement there advanced slowly up the ancient but empty streets of this famous borough a vehicle, which, had it appeared in Piccadilly, would have furnished unremitted laughter for a week, and conversation for a twelvemonth. It was a two-wheeled vehicle, which claimed none of the modern appellations of tilbury, tandem, dennet, or the like ; but aspired only to the humble name of that almost forgotten accommodation, a whiskey ; or, according to some authorities, a tim-whiskey. Green was, or had been, its original colour, and it was placed sturdily and safely low upon its little old-fashioned wheels, which bore much less than the usual proportion to the size of the carriage which they sustained. It had a calash head, which had been pulled up, in consideration either to the dampness of the morning air, or to the retiring delicacy of the fair form which, shrouded by leathern curtains, tenanted this venerable specimen of antediluvian coach-building.

But, as this fair and modest dame noway aspired to the skill of a charioteer, the management of a horse, which seemed as old as the carriage he drew, was in the exclusive charge of an old fellow in a postilion's jacket, whose grey hairs escaped on each side of an old-fashioned velvet jockey-cap, and whose left shoulder was so considerably elevated

above his head, that it seemed as if, with little effort, his neck might have been tucked under his arm, like that of a roasted grouse-cock. This gallant equerry was mounted on a steed as old as that which toiled betwixt the shafts of the carriage, and which he guided by a leading rein. Goading one animal with his single spur, and stimulating the other with his whip, he effected a reasonable trot upon the causeway, which only terminated when the whiskey stopped at Mr. Bindloose's door—an event of importance enough to excite the curiosity of the inhabitants of that and the neighbouring houses. Wheels were laid aside, needles left sticking in the half-finished seams, and many a nose, spectacled and unspectacled, was popped out of the adjoining windows, which had the good fortune to command a view of Mr. Bindloose's front door. The faces of two or three giggling clerks were visible at the barred casements of which we have spoken, much amused at the descent of an old lady from this respectable carriage, whose dress and appearance might possibly have been fashionable at the time when her equipage was new. A satin cardinal, lined with grey squirrels' skin, and a black silk bonnet, trimmed with crape, were garments which did not now excite the respect which in their fresher days they had doubtless commanded. But there was that in the features of the wearer which would have commanded Mr. Bindloose's best regard, though it had appeared in far worse attire ; for he beheld the face of an ancient customer, who had always paid her law expenses with the ready penny, and whose accompt with the bank was balanced by a very respectable sum at her credit. It was, indeed, no other than our respected friend, Mrs. Dods of the Cleikum Inn, St. Ronan's, Aultoun.

Now her arrival intimated matter of deep import. Meg was a person of all others most averse to leave her home, where, in her own opinion at least, nothing went on well without her immediate superintendence. Limited, therefore, as was her sphere, she remained fixed in the centre thereof ; and few as were her satellites, they were under the necessity of performing their revolutions around her, while she herself continued stationary. Saturn, in fact, would be scarce more surprised at a passing call from the

Sun, than Mr. Bindloose at this unexpected visit of his old client. In one breath he rebuked the inquisitive impertinence of his clerks, in another stimulated his housekeeper, old Hannah—for Mr. Bindloose was a bluff bachelor—to get tea ready in the green parlour ; and while yet speaking, was at the side of the whiskey, unclasping the curtains, rolling down the apron, and assisting his old friend to dismount.

'The japanned tea-caddie, Hannah—the best bohea—bid Tib kindle a spark of fire—the morning 's damp—Draw in the giggling faces of ye, ye d—d idle scoundrels, or laugh at your ain toom pouches—it will be lang or your weeldoing fill them.' This was spoken, as the honest lawyer himself might have said, *in transitu*, the rest by the side of the carriage. 'My stars, Mrs. Dods, and is this really your ain sell, *in propria persona* ?—Wha lookit for you at such a time of day ? Anthony, how 's a' wi' ye, Anthony ?—so ye hae taen the road again, Anthony—help us down wi' the apron, Anthony—that will do. Lean on me, Mrs. Dods—help your mistress, Anthony—put the horses in my stable—the lads will give you the key. Come away, Mrs. Dods—I am blithe to see you straight your legs on the causeway of our auld borough again—come in by, and we'll see to get you some breakfast, for ye hae been asteer early this morning.'

'I am a sair trouble to you, Mr. Bindloose,' said the old lady, accepting the offer of his arm, and accompanying him into the house ; 'I am e'en a sair trouble to you, but I could not rest till I had your advice on something of moment.'

'Happy will I be to serve you, my gude auld acquaintance,' said the clerk ; 'but sit you down—sit you down—sit you down, Mrs. Dods,—meat and mass never hindered wark. Ye are something overcome wi' your travel—the spirit canna ay bear through the flesh, Mrs. Dods ; ye should remember that your life is a precious one, and ye should take care of your health, Mrs. Dods.'

'My life precious ! ' exclaimed Meg Dods ; 'nane o' your whullywhaing, Mr. Bindloose—Deil ane wad miss the auld girning alewife, Mr. Bindloose, unless it were here and there a puir body, and maybe the auld house-tyke, that wadna be sae weel guided, puir fallow.'

'Fie, fie! Mrs. Dods,' said the clerk, in a tone of friendly rebuke; 'it vexes an auld friend to hear ye speak of yourself in that respectless sort of a way; and, as for quitting us, I bless God I have not seen you look better this half-score of years. But maybe you will be thinking of setting your house in order, which is the act of a carefu' and of a Christian woman—Oh! it's an awfu' thing to die intestate, if we had grace to consider it.'

'Aweel, I daur say I'll consider that some day soon, Mr. Bindloose; but that's no my present errand.'

'Be it what it like, Mrs. Dods, ye are right heartily welcome here, and we have a' the day to speak of the business in hand—*festina lente*, that is the true law language—hooly and fairly, as one may say—ill treating of business with an empty stomach—and here comes your tea, and I hope Hannah has made it to your taste.'

Meg sipped her tea—confessed Hannah's skill in the mysteries of the Chinese herb—sipped again, then tried to eat a bit of bread and butter, with very indifferent success; and notwithstanding the lawyer's compliments to her good looks, seemed, in reality, on the point of becoming ill.

'In the deil's name, what is the matter?' said the lawyer, too well read in a profession where sharp observation is peculiarly necessary, to suffer these symptoms of agitation to escape him. 'Aye, dame, ye are taking this business of yours deeper to heart than ever I kend you take onything. Ony o' your banded debtors failed, or like to fail? What then, cheer ye up—you can afford a little loss, and it canna be ony great matter, or I would doubtless have heard of it.'

'In troth, but it *is* a loss, Mr. Bindloose; and what say ye to the loss of a friend?'

This was a possibility which had never entered the lawyer's long list of calamities, and he was at some loss to conceive what the old lady could possibly mean by so sentimental a prolusion. But just as he began to come out with his 'Aye, aye, we are all mortal, *Vita incerta, mors certissima!*' and two or three more pithy reflections, which he was in the habit of uttering after funerals when the will of the deceased was about to be opened,—just then

Mrs. Dods was pleased to become the expounder of her own oracle.

'I see how it is, Mr. Bindloose,' she said; 'I maun tell my ain ailment, for you are no likely to guess it; and so, if ye will shut the door, and see that nane of your giggling callants are listening in the passage, I will e'en tell you how things stand with me.'

Mr. Bindloose hastily arose to obey her commands, gave

THE CONSULTATION.—MEG DODS AND MR. BINDLOOSE

a cautionary glance into the bank-office, and saw that his idle apprentices were fast at their desks—turned the key upon them, as if it were in a fit of absence, and then returned, not a little curious to know what could be the matter with his old friend; and leaving off all further attempts to put cases, quietly drew his chair near hers, and awaited her own time to make her communication.

'Mr. Bindloose,' said she, 'I am no sure that you may mind, about six or seven years ago, that there were twa daft English callants, lodgers of mine, that had some trouble from auld St. Ronan's about shooting on the Spring-well-head muirs.'

'I mind it as weel as yesterday, mistress,' said the clerk; 'by the same token you gave me a note for my trouble (which wasna worth speaking about), and bade me no bring in a bill against the puir bairns—ye had ay a kind heart, Mrs. Dods.'

'Maybe, and maybe no, Mr. Bindloose—that is just as I find folk. But concerning these lads, they baith left the country, and, as I think, in some ill blude wi' ane another, and now the auldest and the doucest of the twa came back again about a fortnight sin' syne, and has been my guest ever since.'

'Aweel, and I trust he is not at his auld tricks again, goodwife?' answered the clerk. 'I havena sae muckle to say either wi' the new sheriff or the bench of justices as I used to hae, Mrs. Dods—and the procurator-fiscal is very severe on poaching, being borne out by the new association—few of our auld friends of the Killnakelty are able to come to the sessions now, Mrs. Dods.'

'The waur for the country, Mr. Bindloose,' replied the old lady—'they were decent, considerate men, that didna plague a puir herd-callant muckle about a moorfowl or a mawkin, unless he turned common fowler—Sir Robert Ringhorse used to say, the herd-lads shot as mony gleds and pyots as they did game. But new lords new laws—naething but fine and imprisonment, and the game no a feather the plentier. If I wad hae a brace or twa of birds in the house, as everybody looks for them after the twelfth—I ken what they are like to cost me—And what for no?—risk maun be paid for. There is John Pirner himsell, that has keepit the muir-side thirty year, in spite of a' the lairds in the country, shoots, he tells me, nowadays, as if he felt a rape about his neck.'

'It wasna about ony game business, then, that you wanted advice?' said Bindloose, who, though somewhat of a digresser himself, made little allowance for the excursions of others from the subject in hand.

'Indeed is it no, Mr. Bindloose,' said Meg; 'but it is e'en about this unhappy callant that I spoke to you about. Ye maun ken I have cleiket a particular fancy to this lad, Francis Tirl—a fancy that whiles surprises my very sell, Mr. Bindloose, only that there is nae sin in it.'

'None—none in the world, Mrs. Dods,' said the lawyer, thinking at the same time within his own mind, 'Oho! the mist begins to clear up—the young poacher has hit the mark, I see—winged the old barren grey hen!—aye, aye,—a marriage-contract, no doubt—but I maun gie her line. Ye are a wise woman, Mrs. Dods,' he continued aloud, 'and can doubtless consider the chances and the changes of human affairs.'

'But I could never have considered what has befallen this puir lad, Mr. Bindloose,' said Mrs. Dods, 'through the malice of wicked men. He lived then, at the Cleikum, as I tell you, for mair than a fortnight, as quiet as a lamb on a lea-rig—a decenter lad never came within my door—ate and drank aneugh for the gude of the house, and nae mair than was for his ain gude, whether of body or soul—cleared his bills ilka Saturday at e'en, as regularly as Saturday came round.'

'An admirable customer, no doubt, Mrs. Dods,' said the lawyer.

'Never was the like of him for that matter,' answered the honest dame. 'But to see the malice of men! Some of thae landloupers and gill-flirts doun at the filthy puddle yonder, that they ca' the Waal, had heard of this puir lad, and the bits of pictures that he made fashion of drawing, and they maun cuitle him awa doun to the hottle, where mony a bonny story they had clecked, Mr. Bindloose, baith of Mr. Tirl and of mysell.'

'A Commissary Court business,' said the writer, going off again upon a false scent. 'I shall trim their jackets for them, Mrs. Dods, if you can but bring tight evidence of the facts—I will soon bring them to fine and palinode—I will make them repent meddling with your good name.'

'My gude name! What the sorrow is the matter wi' my name, Mr. Bindloose?' said the irritable client. 'I think ye hae been at the wee cappie this morning, for as early as it is—My gude name!—if onybody touched my gude name, I would neither fash council nor commissary—I wad be down among them, like a jer-falcon amang a wheen wild-geese, and the best amang them that dared to say onything of Meg Dods but what was honest and civil, I wad sune see

if her cockernonnie was made of her ain hair or other folk's. *My* gude name, indeed ! '

' Weel, weel, Mrs. Dods, I was mista'en, that 's a',' said the writer, ' I was mista'en ; and I dare to say you would haud your ain wi' your neighbours as weel as ony woman in the land—But let us hear now what the grief is, in one word.'

' In one word, then, Clerk Bindloose, it is little short of—murder,' said Meg in a low tone, as if the very utterance of the word startled her.

' Murder ! murder, Mrs. Dods ?—it cannot be—there is not a word of it in the sheriff-office—the procurator-fiscal kens nothing of it—there could not be murder in the country, and me not hear of it—for God's sake, take heed what you say, woman, and dinna get yourself into trouble.'

' Mr. Bindloose, I can but speak according to my lights,' said Mrs. Dods ; ' you are in a sense a judge in Israel, at least you are one of the scribes having authority—and I tell you, with a wae and bitter heart, that this puir callant of mine that was lodging in my house has been murdered or kidnapped awa amang thae banditti folk down at the New Waal ; and I'll hae the law put in force against them, if it should cost me a hundred pounds.'

The clerk stood much astonished at the nature of Meg's accusation, and the pertinacity with which she seemed disposed to insist upon it.

' I have this comfort,' she continued, ' that whatever has happened, it has been by no fault of mine, Mr. Bindloose ; for weel I wot, before that bloodthirsty auld half-pay Philistine, MacTurk, got to speech of him, I clawed his cantle to some purpose with my hearth-besom. But the poor simple bairn himsell, that had nae mair knowledge of the wickedness of human nature than a calf has of a flesher's gully, he threepit to see the auld hardened bloodshedder, and trysted wi' him to meet wi' some of the gang at an hour certain the neist day, and awa he gaed to keep tryst, but since that hour naebody ever has set een on him. And the mansworn villains now want to put a disgrace on him, and say that he fled the country rather than face them !—a likely story—fled the country for them !—and leave his bill unsettled—him that was sae regular—and his port-

mantle and his fishing-rod, and the pencils and pictures he held sic a wark about! It 's my faithful belief, Mr. Bindloose—and ye may trust me or no as ye like—that he had some foul play between the Cleikum and the Buck-stane. I have thought it, and I have dreamed it, and I will be at the bottom of it, or my name is not Meg Dods, and that I wad have them a' to reckon on. Aye, aye, that 's right, Mr. Bindloose, tak out your pen and inkhorn, and let us set about it to purpose.'

With considerable difficulty, and at the expense of much cross-examination, Mr. Bindloose extracted from his client a detailed account of the proceedings of the company at the Well towards Tyrrel, so far as they were known to or suspected by Meg, making notes, as the examination proceeded, of what appeared to be matter of consequence. After a moment's consideration, he asked the dame the very natural question, how she came to be acquainted with the material fact that a hostile appointment was made between Captain MacTurk and her lodger, when, according to her own account, it was made *intra parietes*, and *remotis testibus*.

'Aye, but we victuallers ken weel aneugh what goes on in our ain houses,' said Meg—'And what for no? If ye *maun* ken a' about it, I e'en listened through the keyhole of the door.'

'And do you say you heard them settle an appointment for a duel?' said the clerk; 'and did you no take ony measures to hinder mischief, Mrs. Dods, having such a respect for this lad as you say you have, Mrs. Dods? I really wadna have looked for the like o' this at your hands.'

'In truth, Mr. Bindloose,' said Meg, putting her apron to her eyes, 'and that 's what vexes me mair than a' the rest, and ye needna say muckle to ane whose heart is e'en the sairer that she has been a thought to blame. But there has been mony a challenge, as they ca' it, passed in my house when thae daft lads of the Wildfire Club and the Helter-skelter were upon their rambles; and they had ay sense eneugh to make it up without fighting, sae that I really did not apprehend onything like mischief. And ye maun think, moreover, Mr. Bindloose, that it would have been

an unco thing if a guest, in a decent and creditable public like mine, was to have cried coward before ony of thae land-louping blackguards that live down at the hottle yonder.'

'That is to say, Mrs. Dods, you were desirous your guest should fight for the honour of your house,' said Bindloose.

'What for no, Mr. Bindloose? Isna that kind of fray ay about honour? and what for should the honour of a substantial, four-nooked, sclated house of three stories, no be foughten for as weel as the credit of ony of these feckless callants that make such a fray about their reputation? I promise you my house, the Cleikum, stood in the Auld Town of Saint Ronan's before they were born, and it will stand there after they are hanged, as I trust some of them are like to be.'

'Well, but perhaps your lodger had less zeal for the honour of the house, and has quietly taken himself out of harm's way,' said Mr. Bindloose; 'for if I understand your story, this meeting never took place.'

'Have less zeal!' said Meg, determined to be pleased with no supposition of her lawyer, 'Mr. Bindloose, ye little ken him—I wish ye had seen him when he was angry! I dared hardly face him mysell, and there are no mony folk that I am feared for—Meeting! there was nae meeting, I trow—they never dared to meet him fairly—but I am sure waur came of it than ever would have come of a meeting; for Anthony heard twa shots gang off as he was watering the auld naig down at the burn, and that is not far frae the footpath that leads to the Buck-stane. I was angry at him for no making on to see what the matter was, but he thought it was auld Pirner out wi' the double-barrel, and he wasna keen of making himself a witness, in case he suld have been ca'd on in the poaching court.'

'Well,' said the sheriff-clerk, 'and I dare say he did hear a poacher fire a couple of shots—nothing more likely. Believe me, Mrs. Dods, your guest had no fancy for the party Captain MacTurk invited him to—and being a quiet sort of man, he has just walked away to his own home, if he has one—I am really sorry you have given yourself the trouble of this long journey about so simple a matter.'

Mrs. Dods remained with her eyes fixed on the ground in

a very sullen and discontented posture, and when she spoke, it was in a tone of corresponding displeasure.

'Aweel—aweel—live and learn, they say—I thought I had a friend in you, Mr. Bindloose—I am sure I ay took your part when folk misca'd ye, and said ye were this, that, and the other thing, and little better than an auld sneck-drawing loon, Mr. Bindloose. And ye have ay keepit my penny of money, though, nae doubt, Tam Turnpenny lives nearer me, and they say he allows half a per cent. mair than ye do if the siller lies, and mine is but seldom steered.'

'But ye have not the bank's security, madam,' said Mr. Bindloose, reddening. 'I say harm of nae man's credit—ill would it beseem me—but there is a difference between Tam Turnpenny and the bank, I trow.'

'Weel, weel, bank here bank there, I thought I had a friend in you, Mr. Bindloose; and here am I, come from my ain house all the way to yours, for sma' comfort, I think.'

'My stars, madam,' said the perplexed scribe, 'what would you have me to do in such a blind story as yours, Mrs. Dods? Be a thought reasonable—consider that there is no *corpus delicti*.'

'*Corpus delicti!* and what's that?' said Meg; 'something to be paid for, nae doubt, for your hard words a' end in that. And what for suld I no have a *corpus delicti*, or a *habeas corpus*, or ony other *corpus* that I like, sae lang as I am willing to lick and lay down the ready siller?'

'Lord help and pardon us, Mrs. Dods,' said the distressed agent, 'ye mistake the matter a'thegether! When I say there is no *corpus delicti*, I mean to say there is no proof that a crime has been committed.'[1]

'And does the man say that murder is not a crime, then?' answered Meg, who had taken her own view of the subject far too strongly to be converted to any other—'Weel I wot it's a crime, baith by the law of God and man, and mony a pretty man has been strapped for it.'

'I ken all that very weel,' answered the writer; 'but, my stars, Mrs. Dods, there is nae evidence of murder in this case—nae proof that a man has been slain—nae production

[1] For example, a man cannot be tried for murder merely in the case of the non-appearance of an individual; there must be proof that the party has been murdered.

of his dead body—and that is what we call the *corpus delicti*.'

'Weel, than, the deil lick it out of ye,' said Meg, rising in wrath, 'for I will awa hame again; and as for the puir lad's body, I'll hae it fund, if it cost me turning the earth for three miles round wi' pick and shool—if it were but to give the puir bairn Christian burial, and to bring punishment on MacTurk and the murdering crew at the Waal, and to shame an auld doited fule like yoursell, John Bindloose.'

She rose in wrath to call her vehicle; but it was neither the interest nor the intention of the writer that his customer and he should part on such indifferent terms. He implored her patience, and reminded her that the horses, poor things, had just come off their stage—an argument which sounded irresistible in the ears of the old she-publican, in whose early education due care of the post-cattle mingled with the most sacred duties. She therefore resumed her seat again in a sullen mood, and Mr. Bindloose was cudgelling his brains for some argument which might bring the old lady to reason, when his attention was drawn by a noise in the passage.

CHAPTER XV

A PRAISER OF PAST TIMES

Now your traveller,
He and his toothpick at my worship's mess.
King John.

THE noise stated at the conclusion of last chapter to have disturbed Mr. Bindloose was the rapping of one as in haste and impatience at the bank-office door, which office was an apartment of the banker's house, on the left hand of his passage, as the parlour in which he had received Mrs. Dods was upon the right.

In general, this office was patent to all having business there; but at present, whatever might be the hurry of the party who knocked, the clerks within the office could not admit him, being themselves made prisoners by the prudent jealousy of Mr. Bindloose, to prevent them from listening

to his consultation with Mrs. Dods. They therefore answered the angry and impatient knocking of the stranger only with stifled giggling from within, finding it no doubt an excellent joke that their master's precaution was thus interfering with their own discharge of duty.

With one or two hearty curses upon them, as the regular plagues of his life, Mr. Bindloose darted into the passage, and admitted the stranger into his official apartment. The doors both of the parlour and office remaining open, the ears of Luckie Dods (experienced, as the reader knows, in collecting intelligence) could partly overhear what passed. The conversation seemed to regard a cash transaction of some importance, as Meg became aware when the stranger raised a voice which was naturally sharp and high, as he did when uttering the following words, towards the close of a conversation which had lasted about five minutes—'Premium? Not a pice, sir—not a courie—not a farthing—premium for a Bank of England bill? d'ye take me for a fool, sir?—do not I know that you call forty days par when you give remittances to London?'

Mr. Bindloose was here heard to mutter something indistinctly about the custom of the trade.

'Custom!' retorted the stranger, 'no such thing—damned bad custom, if it is one—don't tell me of customs—'Sbodikins, man, I know the rate of exchange all over the world, and have drawn bills from Timbuctoo—My friends in the Strand filed it along with Bruce's from Gondar—talk to me of premium on a Bank of England post-bill! What d'ye look at the bill for? D'ye think it doubtful? I can change it.'

'By no means necessary,' answered Bindloose, 'the bill is quite right; but it is usual to indorse, sir.'

'Certainly—reach me a pen—d'ye think I can write with my rattan? What sort of ink is this?—yellow as curry sauce—never mind—there is my name—Peregrine Touchwood—I got it from the Willoughbies, my Christian name—Have I my full change here?'

'Your full change, sir,' answered Bindloose.

'Why, you should give *me* a premium, friend, instead of me giving you one.'

'It is out of our way, I assure you, sir,' said the banker,

'quite out of our way—but if you would step into the parlour and take a cup of tea '——

'Why, aye,' said the stranger, his voice sounding more distinctly as (talking all the while, and ushered along by Mr. Bindloose) he left the office and moved towards the parlour, 'a cup of tea were no such bad thing, if one could come by it genuine—but as for your premium '—— So saying, he entered the parlour and made his bow to Mrs. Dods, who, seeing what she called a decent, purpose-like body, and aware that his pocket was replenished with English and Scottish paper currency, returned the compliment with her best curtsy.

Mr. Touchwood, when surveyed more at leisure, was a short, stout, active man, who, though sixty years of age and upwards, retained in his sinews and frame the elasticity of an earlier period. His countenance expressed self-confidence, and something like a contempt for those who had neither seen nor endured so much as he had himself. His short black hair was mingled with grey, but not entirely whitened by it. His eyes were jet black, deep-set, small, and sparkling, and contributed, with a short turned-up nose, to express an irritable and choleric habit. His complexion was burnt to a brick-colour by the vicissitudes of climate, to which it had been subjected; and his face, which, at the distance of a yard or two, seemed hale and smooth, appeared, when closely examined, to be seamed with a million of wrinkles, crossing each other in every direction possible, but as fine as if drawn by the point of a very small needle.[1] His dress was a blue coat and buff waistcoat, half-boots remarkably well blacked, and a silk handkerchief tied with military precision. The only antiquated part of his dress was a cocked hat of equilateral dimensions, in the button-hole of which he wore a very small cockade. Mrs. Dods, accustomed to judge of persons by their first appearance, said, that in the three steps which he made from the door to the tea-table, she recognized, without the possibility of mistake, the gait of a person who was well to pass in the world; 'and that,' she added with a wink, 'is what we victuallers are seldom deceived in.

[1] This was a peculiarity in the countenance of the celebrated Cossack leader Platoff.

If a gold-laced waistcoat has an empty pouch, the plain swan's-down will be the brawer of the twa.'

'A drizzling morning, good madam,' said Mr. Touchwood, as with a view of sounding what sort of company he had got into.

'A fine saft morning for the crap, sir,' answered Mrs. Dods with equal solemnity.

'Right, my good madam; *soft* is the very word, though it has been some time since I heard it. I have cast a double hank about the round world since I last heard of a soft[1] morning.'

'You will be from these parts, then?' said the writer, ingeniously putting a case, which, he hoped, would induce the stranger to explain himself. 'And yet, sir,' he added, after a pause, 'I was thinking that Touchwood is not a Scottish name, at least that I ken of.'

'Scottish name?—no,' replied the traveller; 'but a man may have been in these parts before, without being a native—or, being a native, he may have had some reason to change his name—there are many reasons why men change their names.'

'Certainly, and some of them very good ones,' said the lawyer; 'as in the common case of an heir of entail, where deed of provision and tailzie is maist ordinarily implemented by taking up name and arms.'

'Aye, or in the case of a man having made the country too hot for him under his own proper appellative,' said Mr. Touchwood.

'That is a supposition, sir,' replied the lawyer, 'which it would ill become me to put. But at any rate, if you knew this country formerly, ye cannot but be marvellously pleased with the change we have been making since the American war—hill-sides bearing clover instead of heather—rents doubled, trebled, quadrupled—the auld reekie dungeons pulled down, and gentlemen living in as good houses as you will see anywhere in England.'

'Much good may it do them, for a pack of fools!' replied Mr. Touchwood hastily.

'You do not seem much delighted with our improve-

[1] An epithet which expresses, in Scotland, what the barometer calls rainy.

ments, sir,' said the banker, astonished to hear a dissentient voice where he conceived all men unanimous.

'Pleased!' answered the stranger—'Yes, as much pleased as I am with the devil, who, I believe, set many of them agoing. Ye have got an idea that everything must be changed—Unstable as water, ye shall not excel—I tell ye, there have been more changes in this poor nook of yours within the last forty years, than in the great empires of the East for the space of four thousand, for what I know.'

'And why not,' replied Bindloose, 'if they be changes for the better?'

'But they are *not* for the better,' replied Mr. Touchwood eagerly. 'I left your peasantry as poor as rats indeed, but honest and industrious, enduring their lot in this world with firmness, and looking forward to the next with hope—Now they are mere eye-servants—looking at their watches, forsooth, every ten minutes, lest they should work for their master half an instant after loosing-time—And then, instead of studying the Bible on the work-days, to kittle the clergyman with doubtful points of controversy on the Sabbath, they glean all their theology from Tom Paine and Voltaire.'

'Weel I wot the gentleman speaks truth,' said Mrs. Dods. 'I fand a bundle of their bawbee blasphemies in my ain kitchen—But I trow I made a clean house of the packman loon that brought them! No content wi' turning the tawpies' heads wi' ballants, and driving them daft wi' ribands, to cheat them out of their precious souls, and give them the deevil's ware, that I suld say sae, in exchange for the siller that suld support their puir father that's aff wark and bedridden!'

'Father! madam,' said the stranger; 'they think no more of their father than Regan or Goneril.'

'In gude troth, ye have skeel of our sect, sir,' replied the dame; 'they are gomerils, every one of them—I tell them sae every hour of the day, but catch them profiting by the doctrine.'

'And then the brutes are turned mercenary, madam,' said Mr. Touchwood. 'I remember when a Scottishman would have scorned to touch a shilling that he had not earned, and yet was as ready to help a stranger as an Arab of

the desert. And now I did but drop my cane the other day as I was riding—a fellow who was working at the hedge made three steps to lift it—I thanked him, and my friend threw his hat on his head, and "damned my thanks, if that were all"—Saint Giles could not have excelled him.'

'Weel, weel,' said the banker, 'that may be a' as you say, sir, and nae doubt wealth makes wit waver, but the country's wealthy, that cannot be denied, and wealth, sir, ye ken '——

'I know wealth makes itself wings,' answered the cynical stranger; 'but I am not quite sure we have it even now. You make a great show, indeed, with building and cultivation; but stock is not capital, any more than the fat of a corpulent man is health or strength.'

'Surely, Mr. Touchwood,' said Bindloose, who felt his own account in the modern improvements, 'a set of landlords, living like lairds in good earnest, and tenants with better housekeeping than the lairds used to have, and facing Whitsunday and Martinmas as I would face my breakfast—if these are not signs of wealth, I do not know where to seek for them.'

'They are signs of folly, sir,' replied Touchwood; 'folly that is poor, and renders itself poorer by desiring to be thought rich; and how they come by the means they are so ostentatious of, you, who are a banker, perhaps can tell me better than I can guess.'

'There is maybe an accommodation bill discounted now and then, Mr. Touchwood; but men must have accommodation, or the world would stand still—accommodation is the grease that makes the wheels go.'

'Aye, makes them go down hill to the devil,' answered Touchwood. 'I left you bothered about one Air bank, but the whole country is an Air bank now, I think—And who is to pay the piper? But it is all one—I will see little more of it—it is a perfect Babel, and would turn the head of a man who has spent his life with people who love sitting better than running, silence better than speaking, who never eat but when they are hungry, never drink but when thirsty, never laugh without a jest, and never speak but when they have something to say. But here, it is all run, ride, and drive—froth, foam, and flippancy—no steadiness—no character.'

'I'll lay the burden of my life,' said Dame Dods, looking towards her friend Bindloose, 'that the gentleman has been at the new Spaw-waal yonder.'

'Spaw do you call it, madam? If you mean the new establishment that has been spawned down yonder at St. Ronan's, it is the very fountain-head of folly and coxcombry—a Babel for noise and a Vanity Fair for nonsense—no well in your swamps tenanted by such a conceited colony of clamorous frogs.'

'Sir, sir!' exclaimed Dame Dods, delighted with the unqualified sentence passed upon her fashionable rivals, and eager to testify her respect for the judicious stranger who had pronounced it—'will you let me have the pleasure of pouring you out a dish of tea?' And so saying, she took bustling possession of the administration which had hitherto remained in the hands of Mr. Bindloose himself. 'I hope it is to your taste, sir,' she continued when the traveller had accepted her courtesy with the grateful acknowledgement which men addicted to speak a great deal usually show to a willing auditor.

'It is as good as we have any right to expect, ma'am,' answered Mr. Touchwood; 'not quite like what I have drunk at Canton with old Fong Qua; but the Celestial Empire does not send its best tea to Leadenhall Street, nor does Leadenhall Street send its best to Marchthorn.'

'That may be very true, sir,' replied the dame; 'but I will venture to say that Mr. Bindloose's tea is muckle better than you had at the spaw-waal yonder.'

'Tea, madam! I saw none—Ash leaves and blackthorn leaves were brought in in painted canisters, and handed about by powder-monkeys in livery, and consumed by those who liked it, amidst the chattering of parrots and the squalling of kittens. I longed for the days of the Spectator, when I might have laid my penny on the bar, and retired without ceremony—But no—this blessed decoction was circulated under the auspices of some half-crazed blue-stocking or other, and we were saddled with all the formality of an entertainment, for this miserable allowance of a cockle-shell full of cat-lap per head.'

'Weel, sir,' answered Dame Dods, 'all I can say is, that if it had been my luck to have served you at the

Cleikum Inn, which our folks have kept for these twa generations, I canna pretend to say ye should have had such tea as ye have been used to in foreign parts where it grows, but the best I had I wad have gi'en it to a gentleman of your appearance, and I never charged mair than sixpence in all my time, and my father's before me.'

'I wish I had known the Old Inn was still standing, madam,' said the traveller; 'I should certainly have been your guest, and sent down for the water every morning—the doctors insist I must use Cheltenham, or some substitute, for the bile—though, d—n them, I believe it 's only to hide their own ignorance. And I thought this spa would have been the least evil of the two; but I have been fairly overreached—one might as well live in the inside of a bell. I thing young St. Ronan's must be mad, to have established such a Vanity Fair upon his father's old property.'

'Do you ken this Saint Ronan's that now is?' inquired the dame.

'By report only,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'but I have heard of the family, and I think I have read of them, too, in Scottish history. I am sorry to understand they are lower in the world than they have been. This young man does not seem to take the best way to mend matters, spending his time among gamblers and blacklegs.'

'I should be sorry if it were so,' said honest Meg Dods, whose hereditary respect for the family always kept her from joining in any scandal affecting the character of the young laird—'My forbears, sir, have had kindness frae his; and although maybe he may have forgotten all about it, it wad ill become me to say onything of him that should not be said of his father's son.'

Mr. Bindloose had not the same motive for forbearance; he declaimed against Mowbray as a thoughtless dissipater of his own fortune, and that of others. 'I have some reason to speak,' he said, 'having two of his notes for £100 each, which I discounted out of mere kindness and respect for his ancient family, and which he thinks nae mair of retiring than he does of paying the national debt—And here has he been raking every shop in Marchthorn to fit out an entertainment for all the fine folk at the Well yonder; and tradesfolk are obliged to take his acceptances for their

furnishings. But they may cash his bills that will; I ken ane that will never advance a bawbee on ony paper that has John Mowbray either on the back or front of it. He had mair need to be paying the debts which he has made already, than making new anes that he may feed fules and flatterers.'

'I believe he is likely to lose his preparations, too,' said Mr. Touchwood, 'for the entertainment has been put off, as I heard, in consequence of Miss Mowbray's illness.'

'Aye, aye, puir thing!' said Dame Margaret Dods; 'her health has been unsettled for this mony a day.'

'Something wrong here, they tell me,' said the traveller, pointing to his own forehead significantly.

'God only kens,' replied Mrs. Dods; 'but I rather suspect the heart than the head—the puir thing is hurried here and there, and down to the Waal, and up again, and nae society or quiet at hame; and a'thing ganging this unthrifty gate—nae wonder she is no that weel settled.'

'Well,' replied Touchwood, 'she is worse, they say, than she has been, and that has occasioned the party at Shaws Castle having been put off. Besides, now this fine young lord has come down to the Well, undoubtedly they will wait her recovery.'

'A lord!' ejaculated the astonished Mrs. Dods; 'a lord come down to the Waal—they will be neither to haud nor to bind now—ance wud and ay waur—a lord!—set them up and shute them forward—a lord!—the Lord have a care o' us!—a lord at the hottle—Maister Touchwood, it 's my mind he will only prove to be a lord o' Session.'

'Nay, not so, my good lady,' replied the traveller, 'he is an English lord, and, as they say, a lord of Parliament—but some folk pretend to say there is a flaw in the title.'

'I'll warrant is there—a dozen of them!' said Meg with alacrity—for she could by no means endure to think on the accumulation of dignity likely to accrue to the rival establishment from its becoming the residence of an actual nobleman. 'I 'll warrant he'll prove a landlouping lord on their hand, and they will be e'en cheap o' the loss—And he has come down out of order it 's like, and nae doubt he'll no be lang there before he will recover his health, for the credit of the spa.'

'Faith, madam, his present disorder is one which the spa will hardly cure—he is shot in the shoulder with a pistol-bullet—a robbery attempted, it seems—that is one of your new accomplishments—no such thing happened in Scotland in my time—men would have sooner expected to meet with the phoenix than with a highwayman.'

'And where did this happen, if you please, sir?' asked the man of bills.

'Somewhere near the old village,' replied the stranger; 'and, if I am rightly informed, on Wednesday last.'

'This explains your twa shots, I am thinking, Mrs. Dods,' said Mr. Bindloose; 'your groom heard them on the Wednesday—it must have been this attack on the stranger nobleman.'

'Maybe it was, and maybe it was not,' said Mrs. Dods; 'but I'll see gude reason before I give up my ain judgement in that case. I wad like to ken if this gentleman,' she added, returning to the subject from which Mr. Touchwood's interesting conversation had for a few minutes diverted her thoughts, 'has heard aught of Mr. Tirl?'

'If you mean the person to whom this paper relates,' said the stranger, taking a printed handbill from his pocket, 'I heard of little else—the whole place rang of him, till I was almost as sick of Tyrrel as William Rufus was. Some idiotical quarrel which he had engaged in, and which he had not fought out, as their wisdom thought he should have done, was the principal cause of censure. That is another folly now, which has gained ground among you. Formerly, two old proud lairds, or cadets of good family, perhaps quarrelled, and had a rencontre, or fought a duel after the fashion of their old Gothic ancestors; but men who had no grandfathers never dreamed of such folly—And here the folk denounce a trumpery dauber of canvas, for such I understand to be this hero's occupation, as if he were a field-officer, who made valour his profession; and who, if you deprived him of his honour, was like to be deprived of his bread at the same time. Ha, ha, ha! it reminds one of Don Quixote, who took his neighbour, Samson Carrasco, for a knight-errant.'

The perusal of this paper, which contained the notes formerly laid before the reader, containing the statement of

Sir Bingo, and the censure which the company at the Well had thought fit to pass upon his affair with Mr. Tyrrel, induced Mr. Bindloose to say to Mrs. Dods, with as little exultation on the superiority of his own judgement as human nature would permit—

'Ye see now that I was right, Mrs. Dods, and that there was nae earthly use in your fashing yoursell wi' this lang journey—The lad has just ta'en the bent, rather than face Sir Bingo; and troth, I think him the wiser of the twa for sae doing—There ye hae print for it.'

Meg answered somewhat sullenly, 'Ye may be mista'en, for a' that, your ainsell, for as wise as ye are, Mr. Bindloose; I shall hae that matter mair strictly inquired into.'

This led to a renewal of the altercation concerning the probable fate of Tyrrel, in the course of which the stranger was induced to take some interest in the subject.

At length Mrs. Dods, receiving no countenance from the experienced lawyer for the hypothesis she had formed, rose, in something like displeasure, to order her whiskey to be prepared. But, hostess as she was herself when in her own dominions, she reckoned without her host in the present instance; for the humpbacked postilion, as absolute in his department as Mrs. Dods herself, declared that the cattle would not be fit for the road these two hours yet. The good lady was therefore obliged to await his pleasure, bitterly lamenting all the while the loss which a house of public entertainment was sure to sustain by the absence of the landlord or landlady, and anticipating a long list of broken dishes, miscalculated reckonings, unarranged chambers, and other disasters, which she was to expect at her return. Mr. Bindloose, zealous to recover the regard of his good friend and client, which he had in some degree forfeited by contradicting her on a favourite subject, did not choose to offer the unpleasing, though obvious topic of consolation, that an unfrequented inn is little exposed to the accidents she apprehended. On the contrary, he condoled with her very cordially, and went so far as to hint, that if Mr. Touchwood had come to Marchthorn with post-horses, as he supposed from his dress, she could have the advantage of them to return with more dispatch to Saint Ronan's.

'I am not sure,' said Mr. Touchwood suddenly, 'but I may return there myself. In that case I will be glad to set this good lady down, and to stay a few days at her house, if she will receive me. I respect a woman like you, ma'am, who pursues the occupation of your father—I have been in countries, ma'am, where people have followed the same trade, from father to son, for thousands of years—And I like the fashion—it shows a steadiness and sobriety of character.'

Mrs. Dods put on a joyous countenance at this proposal, protesting that all should be done in her power to make things agreeable; and while her good friend, Mr. Bindloose, expatiated upon the comfort her new guest would experience at the Cleikum, she silently contemplated with delight the prospect of a speedy and dazzling triumph, by carrying off a creditable customer from her showy and successful rival at the Well.

'I shall be easily accommodated, ma'am,' said the stranger; 'I have travelled too much and too far to be troublesome. A Spanish venta, a Persian khan, or a Turkish caravanserai, is all the same to me—only, as I have no servant—indeed, never can be plagued with one of these idle loiterers—I must beg you will send to the Well for a bottle of the water on such mornings as I cannot walk there myself—I find it is really of some service to me.'

Mrs. Dods readily promised compliance with this reasonable request; graciously conceding, that there 'could be nae ill in the water itsell, but maybe some gude—it was only the New Inn, and the daft havrels that they ca'd the company, that she misliked. Folk had a jest that St. Ronan dookit the deevil in the Waal, which garr'd it taste ay since of brimstone—but she dared to say that was a' Papist nonsense, for she was tell't by him that ken'd weel, and that was the minister himsell, that St. Ronan was nane of your idolatrous Roman saunts, but a Chaldee' (meaning probably a Culdee), 'whilk was doubtless a very different story.'

Matters being thus arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, the post-chaise was ordered, and speedily appeared at the door of Mr. Bindloose's mansion. It was not without a private feeling of reluctance that honest Meg mounted

the step of a vehicle on the door of which was painted 'FOX INN AND HOTEL, SAINT RONAN'S WELL'; but it was too late to start such scruples.

'I never thought to have entered ane o' their hurley-hackets,' she said, as she seated herself; 'and sic a like thing as it is—scarce room for twa folk! Weel I wot, Mr. Touchwood, when I was in the hiring line, our twa chaises wad hae carried, ilk ane o' them, four grown folk and as mony bairns. I trust that doited creature Anthony will come awa back wi' my whiskey and the cattle as soon as they have had their feed. Are ye sure ye hae room aneugh, sir? I wad fain hotch mysell farther yont.'

'Oh, ma'am,' answered the Oriental, 'I am accustomed to all sorts of conveyances—a dooly, a litter, a cart, a palanquin, or a post-chaise, are all alike to me—I think I could be an inside with Queen Mab in a nut-shell, rather than not get forward. Begging you many pardons, if you have no particular objections, I will light my sheroot,' &c. &c. &c.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CLERGYMAN

> A man he was to all the country dear,
> And passing rich with forty pounds a year.
> GOLDSMITH'S *Deserted Village.*

MRS. DODS'S conviction that her friend Tyrrel had been murdered by the sanguinary Captain MacTurk remained firm and unshaken; but some researches for the supposed body having been found fruitless, as well as expensive, she began to give up the matter in despair. 'She had done her duty'—'she left the matter to them that had a charge anent such things'—and 'Providence would bring the mystery to light in his own fitting time'—such were the moralities with which the good dame consoled herself; and, with less obstinacy than Mr. Bindloose had expected, she retained her opinion without changing her banker and man of business.

Perhaps Meg's acquiescent inactivity in a matter which she had threatened to probe so deeply, was partly owing to the place of poor Tyrrel being supplied in her Blue chamber, and in her daily thoughts and cares, by her new guest, Mr. Touchwood; in possessing whom, a deserter as he was from the Well, she obtained, according to her view of the matter, a decided triumph over her rivals. It sometimes required, however, the full force of this reflection to induce Meg, old and crabbed as she was, to submit to the various caprices and exactions of attention which were displayed by her new lodger. Never any man talked so much as Touchwood of his habitual indifference to food and accommodation in travelling; and probably there never was any traveller who gave more trouble in a house of entertainment. He had his own whims about cookery; and when these were contradicted, especially if he felt at the same time a twinge of incipient gout, one would have thought he had taken his lessons in the pastry-shop of Bedreddin Hassan, and was ready to renew the scene of the unhappy cream tart, which was compounded without pepper. Every now and then he started some new doctrine in culinary matters, which Mrs. Dods deemed a heresy; and then the very house rang with their disputes. Again, his bed must necessarily be made at a certain angle from the pillow to the foot-posts; and the slightest deviation from this disturbed, he said, his nocturnal rest, and did certainly ruffle his temper. He was equally whimsical about the brushing of his clothes, the arrangement of the furniture in his apartment, and a thousand minutiae, which, in conversation, he seemed totally to contemn.

It may seem singular, but such is the inconsistency of human nature, that a guest of this fanciful and capricious disposition gave much more satisfaction to Mrs. Dods than her quiet and indifferent friend Mr. Tyrrel. If her present lodger could blame, he could also applaud; and no artist, conscious of such skill as Mrs. Dods possessed, is indifferent to the praises of such a connoisseur as Mr. Touchwood. The pride of art comforted her for the additional labour; nor was it a matter unworthy of this most honest publican's consideration, that the guests who give most trouble are usually those who incur the largest bills, and pay them with

the best grace. On this point Touchwood was a jewel of a customer. He never denied himself the gratification of the slightest whim, whatever expense he might himself incur, or whatever trouble he might give to those about him ; and all was done under protestation that the matter in question was the most indifferent thing to him in the world. 'What the devil did he care for Burgess's sauces, he that had eat his couscousou, spiced with nothing but the sand of the desert ? only it was a shame for Mrs. Dods to be without what every decent house, above the rank of an alehouse, ought to be largely provided with.'

In short, he fussed, fretted, commanded, and was obeyed ; kept the house in hot water, and yet was so truly good-natured when essential matters were in discussion, that it was impossible to bear him the least ill-will ; so that Mrs. Dods, though in a moment of spleen she sometimes wished him at the top of Tintock, always ended by singing forth his praises. She could not, indeed, help suspecting that he was a Nabob, as well from his conversation about foreign parts, as from his freaks of indulgence to himself and generosity to others,—attributes which she understood to be proper to most 'Men of Ind'. But although the reader has heard her testify a general dislike to this species of Fortune's favourites, Mrs. Dods had sense enough to know that a Nabob living in the neighbourhood, who raises the price of eggs and poultry upon the good housewives around, was very different from a Nabob residing within her own gates, drawing all his supplies from her own larder, and paying, without hesitation or question, whatever bills her conscience permitted her to send in. In short, to come back to the point at which we perhaps might have stopped some time since, landlady and guest were very much pleased with each other.

But *ennui* finds entrance into every scene when the gloss of novelty is over ; and the fiend began to seize upon Mr. Touchwood just when he had got all matters to his mind in the Cleikum Inn—had instructed Dame Dods in the mysteries of curry and mulligatawny—drilled the chambermaid into the habit of making his bed at the angle recommended by Sir John Sinclair—and made some progress in instructing the humpbacked postilion in the

Arabian mode of grooming. Pamphlets and newspapers, sent from London and from Edinburgh by loads, proved inadequate to rout this invader of Mr. Touchwood's comforts; and, at last, he bethought himself of company. The natural resource would have been the Well—but the traveller had a holy shivering of awe, which crossed him at the very recollection of Lady Penelope, who had worked him rather hard during his former brief residence; and although Lady Binks's beauty might have charmed an Asiatic by the plump graces of its contour, our senior was past the thoughts of a Sultana and a harem. At length a bright idea crossed his mind, and he suddenly demanded of Mrs. Dods, who was pouring out his tea for breakfast into a large cup of a very particular species of china, of which he had presented her with a service on condition of her rendering him this personal good office,—

'Pray, Mrs. Dods, what sort of a man is your minister?'

'He's just a man like other men, Mr. Touchwood,' replied Meg Dods; 'what sort of a man should he be?'

'A man like other men?—aye—that is to say, he has the usual complement of legs and arms, eyes and ears—But is he a sensible man?'

'No muckle o' that, sir,' answered Dame Dods; 'for if he was drinking this very tea that ye gat down from London wi' the mail, he wad mistake it for common bohea.'

'Then he has not all his organs—wants a nose, or the use of one at least,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'the tea is right gunpowder—a perfect nosegay.'

'Aweel, that may be,' said the landlady; 'but I have gi'en the minister a dram frae my ain best bottle of real Coniac brandy, and may I never stir frae the bit, if he didna commend my whisky when he set down the glass? There is no ane o' them in the presbytery but himsell—aye, or in the synod either—but wad hae kend whisky frae brandy.'

'But what *sort* of man is he?—Has he learning?' demanded Touchwood.

'Learning?—aneugh o' that,' answered Meg; 'just dung donnart wi' learning—lets a' things about the manse gang whilk gate they will, sae they dinna plague him upon the score. An awfu' thing it is to see sic an ill-redd-up house! If I had the twa tawpies that sorn upon the honest man

ae week under my drilling, I think I wad show them how to sort a lodging!'

'Does he preach well?' asked the guest.

'Oh, weel aneugh, weel aneugh—sometimes he will fling in a lang word or a bit of learning that our farmers and bannet-lairds canna sae weel follow—But what of that, as I am ay telling them?—them that pay stipend get ay the mair for their siller.'

'Does he attend to his parish? Is he kind to the poor?'

'Ower muckle o' that, Maister Touchwood—I am sure he makes the Word gude, and turns not away from those that ask o' him—his very pocket is picked by a wheen ne'er-do-weel blackguards, that gae sorning through the country.'

'Sorning through the country, Mrs. Dods?—what would you think if you had seen the fakirs, the dervishes, the bonzes, the imaums, the monks, and the mendicants, that I have seen? But go on, never mind—Does this minister of yours come much into company?'

'Company?—gae wa',' replied Meg, 'he keeps nae company at a', neither in his ain house or ony gate else. He comes down in the morning in a lang ragged night-gown, like a potato bogle, and down he sits amang his books; and if they dinna bring him something to eat, the puir demented body has never the heart to cry for aught, and he has been ken'd to sit for ten hours thegither, black fasting, whilk is a' mere papistrie, though he does it just out o' forget.'

'Why, landlady, in that case, your parson is anything but the ordinary kind of man you described him—Forget his dinner!—the man must be mad—he shall dine with me to-day—he shall have such a dinner as I'll be bound he won't forget in a hurry.'

'Ye'll maybe find that easier said than dune,' said Mrs. Dods; 'the honest man hasna, in a sense, the taste of his mouth—forby, he never dines out of his ain house—that is, when he dines at a'—A drink of milk and a bit of bread serves his turn, or maybe a cauld potato. It's a heathenish fashion of him, for as good a man as he is; for surely there is nae Christian man but loves his own bowels.'

'Why, that may be,' answered Touchwood, 'but I have

known many who took so much care of their own bowels, my good dame, as to have none for any one else. But come—bustle to the work—get us as good a dinner for two as you can set out—have it ready at three to an instant—get the old hock I had sent me from Cockburn—a bottle of the particular Indian sherry—and another of your own old claret—fourth binn, you know, Meg. And stay, he is a priest, and must have port—have all ready, but don't bring the wine into the sun, as that silly fool Beck did the other day. I can't go down to the larder myself, but let us have no blunders.'

'Nae fear, nae fear,' said Meg, with a toss of the head, 'I need naebody to look into my larder but mysell, I trow—but it 's an unco order of wine for twa folk, and ane o' them a minister.'

'Why, you foolish person, is there not the woman up the village that has just brought another fool into the world, and will she not need sack and caudle, if we leave some of our wine ? '

'A gude ale-posset wad set her better,' said Meg; 'however, if it 's your will, it shall be my pleasure. But the like of sic a gentleman as yoursell never entered my doors ! '

The traveller was gone before she had completed the sentence; and, leaving Meg to bustle and maunder at her leisure, away he marched, with the haste that characterized all his motions when he had any new project in his head, to form an acquaintance with the minister of Saint Ronan's, whom, while he walks down the street to the manse, we will endeavour to introduce to the reader.

The Rev. Josiah Cargill was the son of a small farmer in the south of Scotland; and a weak constitution, joined to the disposition for study which frequently accompanies infirm health, induced his parents, though at the expense of some sacrifices, to educate him for the ministry. They were the rather led to submit to the privations which were necessary to support this expense, because they conceived from their family traditions that he had in his veins some portion of the blood of that celebrated Boanerges of the Covenant, Donald Cargill, who was slain by the persecutors at the town of Queensferry, in the melancholy days of Charles II, merely because, in the plenitude of his sacerdotal

power, he had cast out of the church, and delivered over to Satan by a formal excommunication, the king and royal family, with all the ministers and courtiers thereunto belonging. But if Josiah was really derived from this uncompromising champion, the heat of the family spirit which he might have inherited was qualified by the sweetness of his own disposition, and the quiet temper of the times in which he had the good fortune to live. He was characterized by all who knew him as a mild, gentle, and studious lover of learning, who in the quiet prosecution of his own sole object, the acquisition of knowledge, and especially of that connected with his profession, had the utmost indulgence for all whose pursuits were different from his own. His sole relaxations were those of a gentle, mild, and pensive temper, and were limited to a ramble, almost always solitary, among the woods and hills, in praise of which he was sometimes guilty of a sonnet, but rather because he could not help the attempt than as proposing to himself the fame or the rewards which attend the successful poet. Indeed, far from seeking to insinuate his fugitive pieces into magazines or newspapers, he blushed at his poetical attempts even while alone, and, in fact, was rarely so indulgent to his vein as to commit them to paper.

From the same maid-like modesty of disposition, our student suppressed a strong natural turn towards drawing, although he was repeatedly complimented upon the few sketches which he made, by some whose judgement was generally admitted. It was, however, this neglected talent, which, like the swift feet of the stag in the fable, was fated to render him a service which he might in vain have expected from his worth and learning.

My Lord Bidmore, a distinguished connoisseur, chanced to be in search of a private tutor for his son and heir, the Honourable Augustus Bidmore, and for this purpose had consulted the professor of theology, who passed before him in review several favourite students, any of whom he conceived well suited for the situation; but still his answer to the important and unlooked-for question, 'Did the candidate understand drawing?' was in the negative. The professor, indeed, added his opinion, that such an accomplishment was neither to be desired nor expected in

a student of theology; but, pressed hard with this condition as a *sine qua non*, he at length did remember a dreaming lad about the hall, who seldom could be got to speak above his breath, even when delivering his essays, but was said to have a strong turn for drawing. This was enough for my Lord Bidmore, who contrived to obtain a sight of some of young Cargill's sketches, and was satisfied that, under such a tutor, his son could not fail to maintain that character for hereditary taste which his father and grandfather had acquired at the expense of a considerable estate, the representative value of which was now the painted canvas in the great gallery at Bidmore House.

Upon following up the inquiry concerning the young man's character, he was found to possess all the other necessary qualifications of learning and morals, in a greater degree than perhaps Lord Bidmore might have required; and, to the astonishment of his fellow students, but more especially to his own, Josiah Cargill was promoted to the desired and desirable situation of private tutor to the Honourable Mr. Bidmore.

Mr. Cargill did his duty ably and conscientiously by a spoiled though good-humoured lad, of weak health and very ordinary parts. He could not, indeed, inspire into him any portion of the deep and noble enthusiasm which characterizes the youth of genius; but his pupil made such progress in each branch of his studies as his capacity enabled him to attain. He understood the learned languages, and could be very profound on the subject of various readings—he pursued science, and could class shells, pack mosses, and arrange minerals—he drew without taste, but with much accuracy; and although he attained no commanding height in any pursuit, he knew enough of many studies, literary and scientific, to fill up his time, and divert from temptation a head which was none of the strongest in point of resistance.

Miss Augusta Bidmore, his lordship's only other child, received also the instructions of Cargill in such branches of science as her father chose she should acquire, and her tutor was capable to teach. But her progress was as different from that of her brother, as the fire of heaven differs from that grosser element which the peasant piles upon his smouldering hearth. Her acquirements in Italian and

Spanish literature, in history, in drawing, and in all elegant learning, were such as to enchant her teacher, while at the same time it kept him on the stretch, lest, in her successful career, the scholar should outstrip the master.

Alas! such intercourse, fraught as it is with dangers arising out of the best and kindest, as well as the most natural feelings on either side, proved in the present, as in many other instances, fatal to the peace of the preceptor. Every feeling heart will excuse a weakness which we shall presently find carried with it its own severe punishment. Cadenus, indeed, believe him who will, has assured us that, in such a perilous intercourse, he himself preserved the limits which were unhappily transgressed by the unfortunate Vanessa, his more impassioned pupil :—

> The innocent delight he took
> To see the virgin mind her book
> Was but the master's secret joy,
> In school to hear the finest boy.

But Josiah Cargill was less fortunate, or less cautious. He suffered his fair pupil to become inexpressibly dear to him, before he discovered the precipice towards which he was moving under the direction of a blind and misplaced passion. He was indeed utterly incapable of availing himself of the opportunities afforded by his situation, to involve his pupil in the toils of a mutual passion. Honour and gratitude alike forbade such a line of conduct, even had it been consistent with the natural bashfulness, simplicity, and innocence of his disposition. To sigh and suffer in secret, to form resolutions of separating himself from a situation so fraught with danger, and to postpone from day to day the accomplishment of a resolution so prudent, was all to which the tutor found himself equal; and it is not improbable that the veneration with which he regarded his patron's daughter, with the utter hopelessness of the passion which he nourished, tended to render his love yet more pure and disinterested.

At length the line of conduct which reason had long since recommended could no longer be the subject of procrastination. Mr. Bidmore was destined to foreign travel for a twelvemonth, and Mr. Cargill received from his patron

the alternative of accompanying his pupil, or retiring upon a suitable provision, the reward of his past instructions. It can hardly be doubted which he preferred ; for while he was with young Bidmore, he did not seem entirely separated from his sister. He was sure to hear of Augusta frequently, and to see some part, at least, of the letters which she was to write to her brother ; he might also hope to be remembered in these letters as her 'good friend and tutor' ; and to these consolations his quiet, contemplative, and yet enthusiastic disposition clung as to a secret source of pleasure, the only one which life seemed to open to him.

But fate had a blow in store which he had not anticipated. The chance of Augusta changing her maiden condition for that of a wife, probable as her rank, beauty, and fortune rendered such an event, had never once occurred to him ; and although he had imposed upon himself the unwavering belief that she never could be his, he was inexpressibly affected by the intelligence that she had become the property of another.

The Honourable Mr. Bidmore's letters to his father soon after announced that poor Mr. Cargill had been seized with a nervous fever, and again, that his reconvalescence was attended with so much debility, it seemed both of mind and body, as entirely to destroy his utility as a travelling companion. Shortly after this the travellers separated, and Cargill returned to his native country alone, indulging upon the road in a melancholy abstraction of mind, which he had suffered to grow upon him since the mental shock which he had sustained, and which in time became the most characteristical feature of his demeanour. His meditations were not even disturbed by any anxiety about his future subsistence, although the cessation of his employment seemed to render that precarious. For this, however, Lord Bidmore had made provision ; for, though a coxcomb where the fine arts were concerned, he was in other particulars a just and honourable man, who felt a sincere pride in having drawn the talents of Cargill from obscurity, and entertained due gratitude for the manner in which he had achieved the important task entrusted to him in his family.

His lordship had privately purchased from the Mowbray family the patronage or advowson of the living of

Saint Ronan's, then held by a very old incumbent, who died shortly afterwards; so that upon arriving in England he found himself named to the vacant living. So indifferent, however, did Cargill feel himself towards this preferment, that he might possibly not have taken the trouble to go through the necessary steps previous to his ordination, had it not been on account of his mother, now a widow, and unprovided for, unless by the support which he afforded her. He visited her in her small retreat in the suburbs of Marchthorn, heard her pour out her gratitude to heaven that she should have been granted life long enough to witness her son's promotion to a charge, which, in her eyes, was more honourable and desirable than an episcopal see—heard her chalk out the life which they were to lead together in the humble independence which had thus fallen on him—he heard all this, and had no power to crush her hopes and her triumph by the indulgence of his own romantic feelings. He passed almost mechanically through the usual forms, and was inducted into the living of Saint Ronan's.

Although fanciful and romantic, it was not in Josiah Cargill's nature to yield to unavailing melancholy; yet he sought relief, not in society, but in solitary study. His seclusion was the more complete that his mother, whose education had been as much confined as her fortunes, felt awkward under her new dignities, and willingly acquiesced in her son's secession from society, and spent her whole time in superintending the little household, and in her way providing for all emergencies, the occurrence of which might call Josiah out of his favourite book-room. As old age rendered her inactive, she began to regret the incapacity of her son to superintend his own household, and talked something of matrimony, and the mysteries of the muckle wheel. To these admonitions Mr. Cargill returned only slight and evasive answers; and when the old lady slept in the village churchyard, at a reverend old age, there was no one to perform the office of superintendent in the minister's family. Neither did Josiah Cargill seek for any, but patiently submitted to all the evils with which a bachelor estate is attended, and which were at least equal to those which beset the renowned Mago-Pico during his state of celibacy.[n] His butter was ill churned, and declared by all

but himself and the quean who made it, altogether uneatable; his milk was burnt in the pan, his fruit and vegetables were stolen, and his black stockings mended with blue and white thread.

For all these things the minister cared not, his mind ever bent upon far different matters. Do not let my fair readers do Josiah more than justice, or suppose that, like Beltenebros in the desert, he remained for years the victim of an unfortunate and misplaced passion. No—to the shame of the male sex be it spoken, that no degree of hopeless love, however desperate and sincere, can ever continue for years to embitter life. There must be hope—there must be uncertainty—there must be reciprocity, to enable the tyrant of the soul to secure a dominion of very long duration over a manly and well-constituted mind, which is itself desirous to *will* its freedom. The memory of Augusta had long faded from Josiah's thoughts, or was remembered only as a pleasing but melancholy and unsubstantial dream, while he was straining forward in pursuit of a yet nobler and coyer mistress, in a word, of Knowledge herself.

Every hour that he could spare from his parochial duties, which he discharged with zeal honourable to his heart and head, was devoted to his studies, and spent among his books. But this chase of wisdom, though in itself interesting and dignified, was indulged to an excess which diminished the respectability, nay, the utility, of the deceived student; and he forgot, amid the luxury of deep and dark investigations, that society has its claims, and that the knowledge which is unimparted is necessarily a barren talent, and is lost to society, like the miser's concealed hoard, by the death of the proprietor. His studies were also under the additional disadvantage that, being pursued for the gratification of a desultory longing after knowledge, and directed to no determined object, they turned on points rather curious than useful, and while they served for the amusement of the student himself, promised little utility to mankind at large.

Bewildered amid abstruse researches, metaphysical and historical, Mr. Cargill, living only for himself and his books, acquired many ludicrous habits, which exposed the secluded student to the ridicule of the world, and which tinged,

though they did not altogether obscure, the natural civility of an amiable disposition, as well as the acquired habits of politeness which he had learned in the good society that frequented Lord Bidmore's mansion. He not only indulged in neglect of dress and appearance, and all those ungainly tricks which men are apt to acquire by living very much alone, but besides, and especially, he became probably the most abstracted and absent man of a profession peculiarly liable to cherish such habits. No man fell so regularly into the painful dilemma of mistaking, or, in Scottish phrase, *miskenning*, the person he spoke to, or more frequently inquired of an old maid for her husband, of a childless wife about her young people, of the distressed widower for the spouse at whose funeral he himself had assisted but a fortnight before; and none was ever more familiar with strangers whom he had never seen, or seemed more estranged from those who had a title to think themselves well known to him. The worthy man perpetually confounded sex, age, and calling; and when a blind beggar extended his hand for charity, he has been known to return the civility by taking off his hat, making a low bow, and hoping his worship was well.

Among his brethren, Mr. Cargill alternately commanded respect by the depth of his erudition, and gave occasion to laughter from his odd peculiarities. On the latter occasions he used abruptly to withdraw from the ridicule he had provoked; for notwithstanding the general mildness of his character, his solitary habits had engendered a testy impatience of contradiction, and a keener sense of pain arising from the satire of others, than was natural to his unassuming disposition. As for his parishioners, they enjoyed, as may reasonably be supposed, many a hearty laugh at their pastor's expense, and were sometimes, as Mrs. Dods hinted, more astonished than edified by his learning; for in pursuing a point of biblical criticism, he did not altogether remember that he was addressing a popular and unlearned assembly, not delivering a *concio ad clerum*—a mistake, not arising from any conceit of his learning, or wish to display it, but from the same absence of mind which induced an excellent divine, when preaching before a party of criminals condemned to death, to break off

by promising the wretches, who were to suffer next morning, 'the rest of the discourse at the first proper opportunity.' But all the neighbourhood acknowledged Mr. Cargill's serious and devout discharge of his ministerial duties; and the poor parishioners forgave his innocent peculiarities in consideration of his unbounded charity; while the heritors, if they ridiculed the abstractions of Mr. Cargill on some subjects, had the grace to recollect that they had prevented him from suing an augmentation of stipend, according to the fashion of the clergy around him, or from demanding at their hands a new manse, or the repair of the old one. He once, indeed, wished that they would amend the roof of his book-room, which 'rained in'[1] in a very pluvious manner; but receiving no direct answer from our friend Meiklewham, who neither relished the proposal nor saw means of eluding it, the minister quietly made the necessary repairs at his own expense, and gave the heritors no further trouble on the subject.

Such was the worthy divine whom our bon-vivant at the Cleikum Inn hoped to conciliate by a good dinner and Cockburn's particular; an excellent menstruum in most cases, but not likely to be very efficacious on the present occasion.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ACQUAINTANCE

'Twixt us thus the difference trims:—
Using head instead of limbs,
You have read what I have seen;
Using limbs instead of head,
I have seen what you have read—
Which way does the balance lean?
BUTLER.

OUR traveller, rapid in all his resolutions and motions, strode stoutly down the street, and arrived at the manse, which was, as we have already described it, all but absolutely ruinous. The total desolation and want of order about the door would have argued the place uninhabited,

[1] *Scottice* for 'admitted the rain'.

had it not been for two or three miserable tubs with suds, of such like sluttish contents, which were left there that those who broke their shins among them might receive a sensible proof that 'here the hand of woman had been'. The door being half off its hinges, the entrance was for the time protected by a broken harrow, which must necessarily be removed before entry could be obtained. The little garden, which might have given an air of comfort to the old house had it been kept in any order, was abandoned to a desolation of which that of the sluggard was only a type; and the minister's man, an attendant always proverbial for doing half work, and who seemed in the present instance to do none, was seen among docks and nettles, solacing himself with the few gooseberries which remained on some moss-grown bushes. To him Mr. Touchwood called loudly, inquiring after his master; but the clown, conscious of being taken in flagrant delict, as the law says, fled from him like a guilty thing, instead of obeying his summons, and was soon heard *hupping* and *geeing* to the cart, which he had left on the other side of the broken wall.

Disappointed in his application to the man-servant, Mr. Touchwood knocked with his cane, at first gently, then harder, halloed, bellowed, and shouted, in the hope of calling the attention of some one within doors, but received not a word in reply. At length, thinking that no trespass could be committed upon so forlorn and deserted an establishment, he removed the obstacles to entrance with such a noise as he thought must necessarily have alarmed some one, if there was any live person about the house at all. All was still silent; and, entering a passage where the damp walls and broken flags corresponded to the appearance of things out of doors, he opened a door to the left, which, wonderful to say, still had a latch remaining, and found himself in the parlour, and in the presence of the person whom he came to visit.

Amid a heap of books and other literary lumber, which had accumulated around him, sat, in his well-worn leathern elbow-chair, the learned minister of Saint Ronan's, a thin, spare man, beyond the middle age, of a dark complexion, but with eyes which, though now obscured and vacant, had

been once bright, soft, and expressive, and whose features seemed interesting, the rather that, notwithstanding the carelessness of his dress, he was in the habit of performing his ablutions with eastern precision; for he had forgot

THE ACQUAINTANCE.—MR. TOUCHWOOD AND THE REV. MR. CARGILL

neatness, but not cleanliness. His hair might have appeared much more disorderly, had it not been thinned by time, and disposed chiefly around the sides of his countenance and the back part of his head; black stockings,

ungartered, marked his professional dress, and his feet were thrust into old slipshod shoes, which served him instead of slippers. The rest of his garments, so far as visible, consisted in a plaid nightgown wrapt in long folds round his stooping and emaciated length of body, and reaching down to the slippers aforesaid. He was so intently engaged in studying the book before him, a folio of no ordinary bulk, that he totally disregarded the noise which Mr. Touchwood made in entering the room, as well as the coughs and hems with which he thought it proper to announce his presence.

No notice being taken of these inarticulate signals, Mr. Touchwood, however great an enemy he was to ceremony, saw the necessity of introducing his business, as an apology for his intrusion.

'Hem! sir—Ha, hem!—You see before you a person in some distress for want of society, who has taken the liberty to call on you as a good pastor, who may be, in Christian charity, willing to afford him a little of your company, since he is tired of his own.'

Of this speech Mr. Cargill only understood the words 'distress' and 'charity', sounds with which he was well acquainted, and which never failed to produce some effect upon him. He looked at his visitor with lack-lustre eye, and, without correcting the first opinion which he had formed, although the stranger's plump and sturdy frame, as well as his nicely-brushed coat, glancing cane, and, above all, his upright and self-satisfied manner, resembled in no respect the dress, form, or bearing of a mendicant, he quietly thrust a shilling into his hand, and relapsed into the studious contemplation which the entrance of Touchwood had interrupted.

'Upon my word, my good sir,' said his visitor, surprised at a degree of absence of mind which he could hardly have conceived possible, 'you have entirely mistaken my object.'

'I am sorry my mite is insufficient, my friend,' said the clergyman, without again raising his eyes, 'it is all I have at present to bestow.'

'If you will have the kindness to look up for a moment, my good sir,' said the traveller, 'you may possibly perceive that you labour under a considerable mistake.'

Mr. Cargill raised his head, recalled his attention, and,

seeing that he had a well-dressed, respectable-looking person before him, he exclaimed in much confusion, 'Ha !—yes—on my word, I was so immersed in my book. I believe —I think I have the pleasure to see my worthy friend, Mr. Lavender ? '

'No such thing, Mr. Cargill,' replied Mr. Touchwood. 'I will save you the trouble of trying to recollect me—you never saw me before. But do not let me disturb your studies; I am in no hurry, and my business can wait your leisure.'

'I am much obliged,' said Mr. Cargill; 'have the goodness to take a chair, if you can find one. I have a train of thought to recover, a slight calculation to finish, and then I am at your command.'

The visitor found among the broken furniture, not without difficulty, a seat strong enough to support his weight, and sat down, resting upon his cane, and looking attentively at his host, who very soon became totally insensible of his presence. A long pause of total silence ensued, only disturbed by the rustling leaves of the folio from which Mr. Cargill seemed to be making extracts, and now and then by a little exclamation of surprise and impatience, when he dipped his pen, as happened once or twice, into his snuff-box, instead of the ink-standish which stood beside it. At length, just as Mr. Touchwood began to think the scene as tedious as it was singular, the abstracted student raised his head, and spoke as if in soliloquy, 'From Acon, Accor, or St. John d'Acre, to Jerusalem, how far ? '

'Twenty-three miles north-north-west,' answered his visitor, without hesitation.

Mr. Cargill expressed no more surprise at a question which he had put to himself being answered by the voice of another, than if he had found the distance on the map, and, indeed, was not probably aware of the medium through which his question had been solved; and it was the tenor of the answer alone which he attended to in his reply. 'Twenty-three miles—Ingulphus,' laying his hand on the volume, 'and Jeffrey Winesauf do not agree in this.'

'They may both be d—d, then, for lying blockheads,' answered the traveller

'You might have contradicted their authority, sir, without using such an expression,' said the divine gravely.

'I cry you mercy, doctor,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'but would you compare these parchment fellows with me, that have made my legs my compasses over great part of the inhabited world?'

'You have been in Palestine, then?' said Mr. Cargill, drawing himself upright in his chair, and speaking with eagerness and with interest.

'You may swear that, doctor, and at Acre too. Why, I was there the month after Boney had found it too hard a nut to crack. I dined with Sir Sidney's chum, old Djezzar Pasha, and an excellent dinner we had, but for a dessert of noses and ears brought on after the last remove, which spoiled my digestion. Old Djezzar thought it so good a joke, that you hardly saw a man in Acre whose face was not as flat as the palm of my hand. Gad, I respect my olfactory organ, and set off the next morning as fast as the most cursed hard-trotting dromedary that ever fell to poor pilgrim's lot could contrive to tramp.'

'If you have really been in the Holy Land, sir,' said Mr. Cargill, whom the reckless gaiety of Touchwood's manner rendered somewhat suspicious of a trick, 'you will be able materially to enlighten me on the subject of the Crusades.'

'They happened before my time, doctor,' replied the traveller.

'You are to understand that my curiosity refers to the geography of the countries where these events took place,' answered Mr. Cargill.

'Oh! as to that matter, you are lighted on your feet,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'for the time present I can fit you. Turk, Arab, Copt, and Druse, I know every one of them, and can make you as well acquainted with them as myself. Without stirring a step beyond your threshold, you shall know Syria as well as I do. But one good turn deserves another—in that case, you must have the goodness to dine with me.'

'I go seldom abroad, sir,' said the minister, with a good deal of hesitation, for his habits of solitude and seclusion could not be entirely overcome, even by the expectation

raised by the traveller's discourse ; 'yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure of waiting on a gentleman possessed of so much experience.'

'Well, then,' said Mr. Touchwood, 'three be the hour—I never dine later, and always to a minute—and the place, the Cleikum Inn, up the way ; where Mrs. Dods is at this moment busy in making ready such a dinner as your learning has seldom seen, doctor, for I brought the receipts from the four different quarters of the globe.'

Upon this treaty they parted ; and Mr. Cargill, after musing for a short while upon the singular chance which had sent a living man to answer those doubts for which he was in vain consulting ancient authorities, at length resumed, by degrees, the train of reflection and investigation which Mr. Touchwood's visit had interrupted, and in a short time lost all recollection of his episodical visitor, and of the engagement which he had formed.

Not so Mr. Touchwood, who, when not occupied with business of real importance, had the art, as the reader may have observed, to make a prodigious fuss about nothing at all. Upon the present occasion, he bustled in and out of the kitchen, till Mrs. Dods lost patience, and threatened to pin the dishclout to his tail ; a menace which he pardoned, in consideration that in all the countries which he had visited, which are sufficiently civilized to boast of cooks, these artists, toiling in their fiery element, have a privilege to be testy and impatient. He therefore retreated from the torrid region of Mrs. Dods's microcosm, and employed his time in the usual devices of loiterers, partly by walking for an appetite, partly by observing the progress of his watch towards three o'clock, when he had happily succeeded in getting an employment more serious. His table, in the blue parlour, was displayed with two covers, after the fairest fashion of the Cleikum Inn ; yet the landlady, with a look 'civil but sly,' contrived to insinuate a doubt whether the clergyman would come, 'when a' was dune.'

Mr. Touchwood scorned to listen to such an insinuation until the fated hour arrived, and brought with it no Mr. Cargill. The impatient entertainer allowed five minutes for difference of clocks, and variation of time, and other five for the procrastination of one who went little

into society. But no sooner were the last five minutes expended, than he darted off for the manse, not, indeed, much like a greyhound or a deer, but with the momentum of a corpulent and well-appetized elderly gentleman, who is in haste to secure his dinner. He bounced without ceremony into the parlour, where he found the worthy divine clothed in the same plaid nightgown, and seated in the very same elbow-chair, in which he had left him five hours before. His sudden entrance recalled to Mr. Cargill, not an accurate, but something of a general recollection, of what had passed in the morning, and he hastened to apologize with 'Ha!—indeed—already?—upon my word, Mr. A—a—, I mean my dear friend, I am afraid I have used you ill—I forgot to order any dinner, but we will do our best. Eppie—Eppie!'

Not at the first, second, nor third call, but *ex intervallo*, as the lawyers express it, Eppie, a bare-legged, shock-headed, thick-ankled, red-armed wench, entered, and announced her presence by an emphatic 'What 's your wull?'

'Have you got anything in the house for dinner, Eppie?'

'Naething but bread and milk, plenty o't—what should I have?'

'You see, sir,' said Mr. Cargill, 'you are like to have a Pythagorean entertainment; but you are a traveller, and have doubtless been in your time thankful for bread and milk.'

'But never when there was anything better to be had,' said Mr. Touchwood. 'Come, doctor, I beg your pardon, but your wits are fairly gone a wool-gathering; it was *I* invited *you* to dinner, up at the inn yonder, not you me.'

'On my word, and so it was,' said Mr. Cargill; 'I knew I was quite right—I knew there was a dinner engagement betwixt us, I was sure of that, and that is the main point. Come, sir, I wait upon you.'

'Will you not first change your dress?' said the visitor, seeing with astonishment that the divine proposed to attend him in his plaid nightgown; 'why, we shall have all the boys in the village after us—you will look like an owl in sunshine, and they will flock round you like so many hedge-sparrows.'

'I will get my clothes instantly,' said the worthy clergyman; 'I will get ready directly. I am really ashamed to keep you waiting, my dear Mr.—eh—eh—your name has this instant escaped me.'

'It is Touchwood, sir, at your service; I do not believe you ever heard it before,' answered the traveller.

'True—right—no more I have; well, my good Mr. Touchstone, will you sit down an instant until we see what we can do?—strange slaves we make ourselves to these bodies of ours, Mr. Touchstone: the clothing and the sustaining of them costs us much thought and leisure, which might be better employed in catering for the wants of our immortal spirits.'

Mr. Touchwood thought in his heart that never had Brahmin or Gymnosophist less reason to reproach himself with excess in the indulgence of the table, or of the toilette, than the sage before him; but he assented to the doctrine, as he would have done to any minor heresy, rather than protract matters by further discussing the point at present. In a short time the minister was dressed in his Sunday's suit, without any further mistake than turning one of his black stockings inside out; and Mr. Touchwood, happy as was Boswell when he carried off Dr. Johnson in triumph to dine with Strachan and John Wilkes, had the pleasure of escorting him to the Cleikum Inn.

In the course of the afternoon they became more familiar, and the familiarity led to their forming a considerable estimate of each other's powers and acquirements. It is true, the traveller thought the student too pedantic, too much attached to systems, which, formed in solitude, he was unwilling to renounce, even when contradicted by the voice and testimony of experience; and, moreover, considered his utter inattention to the quality of what he ate and drank, as unworthy of a rational, that is, of a cooking creature, or of a being who, as defined by Johnson, holds his dinner as the most important business of the day. Cargill did not act up to this definition, and was, therefore, in the eyes of his new acquaintance, so far ignorant and uncivilized. What then? He was still a sensible, intelligent man, however abstemious and bookish.

On the other hand, the divine could not help regarding

his new friend as something of an epicure or belly-god, nor could he observe in him either the perfect education, or the polished bearing, which mark the gentleman of rank, and of which, while he mingled with the world, he had become a competent judge. Neither did it escape him, that in the catalogue of Mr. Touchwood's defects, occurred that of many travellers, a slight disposition to exaggerate his own personal adventures, and to prose concerning his own exploits. But then, his acquaintance with eastern manners, existing now in the same state in which they were found during the time of the Crusades, formed a living commentary on the works of William of Tyre, Raymund of Saint Giles, the Moslem annals of Abulfaragi, and other historians of the dark period, with which his studies were at present occupied.

A friendship, a companionship at least, was therefore struck up hastily betwixt these two originals; and to the astonishment of the whole parish of Saint Ronan's, the minister thereof was seen once more leagued and united with an individual of his species, generally called among them the Cleikum nabob. Their intercourse sometimes consisted in long walks, which they took in company, traversing, however, as limited a space of ground as if it had been actually roped in for their pedestrian exercise. Their parade was, according to circumstances, a low haugh at the nether end of the ruinous hamlet, or the esplanade in front of the old castle; and, in either case, the direct longitude of their promenade never exceeded a hundred yards. Sometimes, but rarely, the divine took share of Mr. Touchwood's meal, though less splendidly set forth than when he was first invited to partake of it; for, like the unostentatious owner of the gold cup in Parnell's *Hermit*,

——Still he welcomed, but with less of cost.

On these occasions, the conversation was not of the regular and compacted nature which passes betwixt men, as they are ordinarily termed, of this world. On the contrary, the one party was often thinking of Saladin and Cœur-de-Lion, when the other was haranguing on Haidar Alí and Sir Eyre Coote. Still, however, the one spoke, and the other seemed to listen; and, perhaps, the lighter intercourse of

society, where amusement is the sole object, can scarcely rest on a safer and more secure basis.

It was on one of the evenings when the learned divine had taken his place at Mr. Touchwood's social board, or rather at Mrs. Dods's,—for a cup of excellent tea, the only luxury which Mr. Cargill continued to partake of with some complacence, was the regale before them,—that a card was delivered to the nabob.

'Mr. and Miss Mowbray see company at Shaws Castle on the twentieth current, at two o'clock. *Déjeûner*. Dresses in character admitted. A dramatic picture.' 'See company? the more fools they,' he continued by way of comment. 'See company ?—choice phrases are ever commendable—and this piece of pasteboard is to intimate that one may go and meet all the fools of the parish, if they have a mind; in my time they asked the honour, or the pleasure, of a stranger's company. I suppose, by and by, we shall have in this country the ceremonial of a Bedouin's tent, where every ragged hadji, with his green turban, comes in slap without leave asked, and has his black paw among the rice, with no other apology than *Salam Alicum*.—"Dresses in character. Dramatic picture": what new tomfoolery can that be ?—but it does not signify. Doctor! I say, doctor!—but he is in the seventh heaven. I say, Mother Dods, you who know all the news—Is this the feast that was put off until Miss Mowbray should be better ?'

'Troth is it, Maister Touchwood: they are no in the way of giving twa entertainments in one season, no very wise to gie ane maybe, but they ken best.'

'I say, doctor, doctor !—Bless his five wits, he is charging the Moslemah with stout King Richard—I say, doctor, do you know anything of these Mowbrays ?'

'Nothing extremely particular,' answered Mr. Cargill after a pause; 'it is an ordinary tale of greatness, which blazes in one century, and is extinguished in the next. I think Camden says, that Thomas Mowbray, who was Grand Marshal of England, succeeded to that high office, as well as to the Dukedom of Norfolk, as grandson of Roger Bigot, in 1301.'

'Pshaw, man, you are back into the fourteenth century: I mean these Mowbrays of St. Ronan's—now, don't fall

asleep again until you have answered my question, and don't look so like a startled hare; I am speaking no treason.'

The clergyman floundered a moment, as is usual with an absent man who is recovering the train of his ideas, or a somnambulist when he is suddenly awakened, and then answered, still with hesitation:

'Mowbray of St. Ronan's?—ha—eh—I know, that is, I did know the family.'

'Here they are going to give a masquerade, a *bal paré*, private theatricals, I think, and what not,' handing him the card.

'I saw something of this a fortnight ago,' said Mr. Cargill; 'indeed, I either had a ticket myself, or I saw such a one as that.'

'Are you sure you did not attend the party, doctor?' said the nabob.

'Who attend? I? you are jesting, Mr. Touchwood.'

'But are you quite positive?' demanded Mr. Touchwood, who had observed, to his infinite amusement, that the learned and abstracted scholar was so conscious of his own peculiarities, as never to be very sure on any such subject.

'Positive!' he repeated with embarrassment; 'my memory is so wretched that I never like to be positive, but had I done anything so far out of my usual way, I must have remembered it, one would think—and—I *am* positive I was not there.'

'Neither could you, doctor,' said the nabob, laughing at the process by which his friend reasoned himself into confidence; 'for it did not take place—it was adjourned, and this is the second invitation; there will be one for you, as you had a card to the former. Come, doctor, you must go: you and I will go together, I as an imam—I can say my Bismillah with any hadji of them all—you as a cardinal, or what you like best.'

'Who, I?—it is unbecoming my station, Mr. Touchwood,' said the clergyman, 'a folly altogether inconsistent with my habits.'

'All the better: you shall change your habits.'

'You had better gang up and see them, Mr. Cargill,' said Mrs. Dods; 'for it's maybe the last sight ye may see of

Miss Mowbray; they say she is to be married and off to England ane of thae odd-come-shortlies, wi' some of the gowks about the Waal down by.'

'Married!' said the clergyman; 'it is impossible!'

'But where 's the impossibility, Mr. Cargill, when ye see folk marry every day, and buckle them yoursell into the bargain? Maybe ye think the puir lassie has a bee in her bannet; but ye ken yoursell if naebody but wise folk were to marry, the warld wad be ill peopled. I think it 's the wise folk that keep single, like yoursell and me, Mr. Cargill. Gude guide us!—are ye weel?—will ye taste a drap o' something?'

'Sniff at my attar of roses,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'the scent would revive the dead. Why, what in the devil's name is the meaning of this?—you were quite well just now.'

'A sudden qualm,' said Mr. Cargill, recovering himself.

'Oh! Mr Cargill,' said Dame Dods, 'this comes of your lang fasts.'

'Right, dame,' subjoined Mr. Touchwood; 'and of breaking them with sour milk and pease bannock; the least morsel of Christian food is rejected by the stomach, just as a small gentleman refuses the visit of a creditable neighbour, lest he see the nakedness of the land—ha! ha!'

'And there is really a talk of Miss Mowbray of Saint Ronan's being married?' said the clergyman.

'Troth is there,' said the dame; 'it 's Trotting Nelly's news; and though she likes a drappie, I dinna think she would invent a lee or carry ane—at least to me, that am a gude customer.'

'This must be looked to,' said Mr. Cargill, as if speaking to himself.

'In troth, and so it should,' said Dame Dods; 'it 's a sin and a shame if they should employ the tinkling cymbal they ca' Chatterly, and sic a Presbyterian trumpet as yoursell in the land, Mr. Cargill; and if ye will take a fule's advice, ye winna let the multure be ta'en by your ain mill, Mr. Cargill.'

'True, true, good Mother Dods,' said the nabob; 'gloves and hat-bands are things to be looked after, and Mr. Cargill had better go down to this cursed festivity with me, in order to see after his own interest.'

'I must speak with the young lady,' said the clergyman, still in a brown study.

'Right, right, my boy of blackletter,' said the nabob; 'with me you shall go, and we'll bring them to submission to Mother Church, I warrant you. Why, the idea of being cheated in such a way would scare a santon out of his trance. What dress will you wear?'

'My own, to be sure,' said the divine, starting from his reverie.

'True, thou art right again—they may want to knit the knot on the spot, and who would be married by a parson in masquerade? We go to the entertainment though, it is a done thing.'

The clergyman assented, provided he should receive an invitation; and as that was found at the manse, he had no excuse for retracting, even if he had seemed to desire one.

CHAPTER XVIII

FORTUNE'S FROLICS

Count Basset.—We gentlemen, whose carriages run on the four aces, are apt to have a wheel out of order.—*The Provoked Husband.*

Our history must now look a little backwards; and although it is rather foreign to our natural style of composition, it must speak more in narrative, and less in dialogue, rather telling what happened, than its effects upon the actors. Our promise, however, is only conditional, for we foresee temptations which may render it difficult for us exactly to keep it.

The arrival of the young Earl of Etherington at the salutiferous fountain of Saint Ronan's had produced the strongest sensation; especially as it was joined with the singular accident of the attempt upon his lordship's person, as he took a short cut through the woods upon foot, at a distance from his equipage and servants. The gallantry with which he beat off the highwayman was only equal to his generosity; for he declined making any researches

after the poor devil, although his lordship had received a severe wound in the scuffle.

Of the 'three black graces,' as they have been termed by one of the most pleasing companions of our time, law and physic hastened to do homage to Lord Etherington, represented by Mr. Meiklewham and Dr. Quackleben; while divinity, as favourable, though more coy, in the person of the Reverend Mr. Simon Chatterly, stood on tiptoe to offer any service in her power.

For the honourable reason already assigned, his lordship, after thanking Mr. Meiklewham, and hinting that he might have different occasion for his services, declined his offer to search out the delinquent by whom he had been wounded; while to the care of the doctor he subjected the cure of a smart flesh-wound in the arm, together with a slight scratch on the temple; and so very genteel was his behaviour on the occasion, that the doctor, in his anxiety for his safety, enjoined him a month's course of the waters, if he would enjoy the comfort of a complete and perfect recovery. Nothing so frequent, he could assure his lordship, as the opening of cicatrized wounds; and the waters of Saint Ronan's spring being, according to Dr. Quackleben, a remedy for all the troubles which flesh is heir to, could not fail to equal those of Barege, in facilitating the discharge of all splinters or extraneous matter, which a bullet may chance to incorporate with the human frame, to its great annoyance. For he was wont to say, that although he could not declare the waters which he patronized to be an absolute *panpharmacon*, yet he would with word and pen maintain that they possessed the principal virtues of the most celebrated medicinal springs in the known world. In short, the love of Alpheus for Arethusa was a mere jest, compared to that which the doctor entertained for his favourite fountain.

The new and noble guest, whose arrival so much illustrated these scenes of convalescence and of gaiety, was not at first seen so much at the ordinary, and other places of public resort, as had been the hope of the worthy company assembled. His health and his wound proved an excuse for making his visits to the society few and far between.

But when he did appear, his manners and person were

infinitely captivating; and even the carnation-coloured silk handkerchief, which suspended his wounded arm, together with the paleness and languor which loss of blood had left on his handsome and open countenance, gave a grace to the whole person which many of the ladies declared irresistible. All contended for his notice, attracted at once by his affability, and piqued by the calm and easy nonchalance with which it seemed to be blended. The scheming and selfish Mowbray, the coarse-minded and brutal Sir Bingo, accustomed to consider themselves, and to be considered, as the first men of the party, sank into comparative insignificance. But chiefly Lady Penelope threw out the captivations of her wit and her literature; while Lady Binks, trusting to her natural charms, endeavoured equally to attract his notice. The other nymphs of the Spa held a little back, upon the principle of that politeness which, at continental hunting-parties, affords the first shot at a fine piece of game to the person of the highest rank present; but the thought throbbed in many a fair bosom, that their ladyships might miss their aim, in spite of the advantages thus allowed them, and that there might then be room for less exalted, but perhaps not less skilful, markswomen, to try their chance.

But while the earl thus withdrew from public society, it was necessary, at least natural, that he should choose some one with whom to share the solitude of his own apartment; and Mowbray, superior in rank to the half-pay whisky-drinking Captain MacTurk; in dash to Winter-blossom, who was broken down, and turned twaddler; and in tact and sense to Sir Bingo Binks; easily manœuvred himself into his lordship's more intimate society; and internally thanking the honest footpad, whose bullet had been the indirect means of secluding his intended victim from all society but his own, he gradually began to feel the way, and prove the strength of his antagonist, at the various games of skill and hazard which he introduced, apparently with the sole purpose of relieving the tedium of a sick-chamber.

Meiklewham, who felt, or affected, the greatest possible interest in his patron's success, and who watched every opportunity to inquire how his schemes advanced, received

at first such favourable accounts as made him grin from ear to ear, rub his hands, and chuckle forth such bursts of glee as only the success of triumphant roguery could have extorted from him. Mowbray looked grave, however, and checked his mirth.

'There was something in it after all,' he said, 'that he could not perfectly understand. Etherington, a used hand—d—d sharp—up to everything, and yet he lost his money like a baby.'

'And what the matter how he loses it, so you win it like a man?' said his legal friend and adviser.

'Why, hang it, I cannot tell,' replied Mowbray—'were it not that I think he has scarce the impudence to propose such a thing to succeed, curse me but I should think he was coming the old soldier over me, and keeping up his game. But no—he can scarce have the impudence to think of that. I find, however, that he has done Wolverine, cleaned out poor Tom—though Tom wrote to me the precise contrary, yet the truth has since come out. Well, I shall avenge him, for I see his lordship is to be had as well as other folks.'

'Weel, Mr. Mowbray,' said the lawyer in a tone of affected sympathy, 'ye ken your own ways best, but the heavens will bless a moderate mind. I would not like to see you ruin this poor lad *funditus*, that is to say, out and out. To lose some of the ready will do him no great harm, and maybe give him a lesson he may be the better of as long as he lives, but I wad not, as an honest man, wish you to go deeper—you should spare the lad, Mr. Mowbray.'

'Who spared *me*, Meiklewham?' said Mowbray, with a look and tone of deep emphasis. 'No, no, he must go through the mill—money and money's worth. His seat is called Oakendale—think of that, Mick—Oakendale! Oh, name of thrice happy augury! Speak not of mercy, Mick; the squirrels of Oakendale must be dismounted, and learn to go a-foot. What mercy can the wandering lord of Troy expect among the Greeks? The Greeks! I am a very Suliote—the bravest of Greeks.

> I think not of pity, I think not of fear,
> He neither must know who would serve the Vizier.

And necessity, Mick,' he concluded, with a tone something

altered, 'necessity is as unrelenting a leader as any vizier or pasha whom Scanderbeg ever fought with, or Byron has sung.'

Meiklewham echoed his patron's ejaculation with a sound betwixt a whine, a chuckle, and a groan; the first being designed to express his pretended pity for the destined victim; the second his sympathy with his patron's prospects of success; and the third being a whistle admonitory of the dangerous courses through which his object was to be pursued.

Suliote as he boasted himself, Mowbray had, soon after this conversation, some reason to admit that,

When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war.

The light skirmishing betwixt the parties was ended, and the serious battle commenced with some caution on either side; each perhaps desirous of being master of his opponent's system of tactics, before exposing his own. Piquet, the most beautiful game at which a man can make sacrifice of his fortune, was one with which Mowbray had, for his misfortune perhaps, been accounted, from an early age, a great proficient, and in which the Earl of Etherington, with less experience, proved no novice. They now played for such stakes as Mowbray's state of fortune rendered considerable to him, though his antagonist appeared not to regard the amount. And they played with various success; for, though Mowbray at times returned with a smile of confidence the inquiring looks of his friend Meiklewham, there were other occasions on which he seemed to evade them, as if his own had a sad confession to make in reply.

These alternations, though frequent, did not occupy, after all, many days; for Mowbray, a friend of all hours, spent much of his time in Lord Etherington's apartment, and these few days were days of battle. In the meantime, as his lordship was now sufficiently recovered to join the party at Shaws Castle, and Miss Mowbray's health being announced as restored, that proposal was renewed, with the addition of a dramatic entertainment, the nature of which we shall afterwards have occasion to explain. Cards were anew issued to all those who had been formerly included in the invitation, and of course to Mr. Touchwood, as

formerly a resident at the Well, and now in the neighbourhood; it being previously agreed among the ladies, that a nabob, though sometimes a dingy or damaged commodity, was not to be rashly or unnecessarily neglected. As to the parson, he had been asked, of course, as an old acquaintance of the Mowbray house, not to be left out when the friends of the family were invited on a great scale; but his habits were well known, and it was no more expected that he would leave his manse on such an occasion, than that the kirk should loosen itself from its foundations.

It was after these arrangements had been made, that the laird of St. Ronan's suddenly entered Meiklewham's private apartment with looks of exultation. The worthy scribe turned his spectacled nose towards his patron, and holding in one hand the bunch of papers which he had been just perusing, and in the other the tape with which he was about to tie them up again, suspended that operation to await with open eyes and ears the communication of Mowbray.

'I have done him!' he said, exultingly, yet in a tone of voice lowered almost to a whisper; 'capoted his lordship for this bout—doubled my capital, Mick, and something more. Hush, don't interrupt me—we must think of Clara now—she must share the sunshine, should it prove but a blink before a storm. You know, Mick, these two d—d women, Lady Penelope and the Binks, have settled that they will have something like a *bal paré* on this occasion, a sort of theatrical exhibition, and that those who like it shall be dressed in character. I know their meaning—they think Clara has no dress fit for such foolery, and so they hope to eclipse her; Lady Pen, with her old-fashioned ill-set diamonds, and my Lady Binks, with the new-fashioned finery which she swopped her character for. But Clara shan't be borne down so, by ——! I got that affected slut, Lady Binks's maid, to tell me what her mistress had set her mind on, and she is to wear a Grecian habit, forsooth, like one of Will Allan's eastern subjects. But here 's the rub—there is only one shawl for sale in Edinburgh that is worth showing off in, and that is at the Gallery of Fashion. Now, Mick, my friend, that shawl must be had for Clara, with the other trankums of muslin, and lace, and so forth, which

you will find marked in the paper there. Send instantly and secure it, for, as Lady Binks writes by to-morrow's post, your order can go by to-night's mail. There is a note for 100*l*.'

From a mechanical habit of never refusing anything, Meiklewham readily took the note, but having looked at it through his spectacles, he continued to hold it in his hand as he remonstrated with his patron. 'This is a' very kindly meant, St. Ronan's—very kindly meant; and I wad be the last to say that Miss Clara does not merit respect and kindness at your hand; but I doubt mickle if she wad care a bodle for thae braw things. Ye ken yoursell, she seldom alters her fashions. Od, she thinks her riding-habit dress eneugh for ony company; and if you were ganging by good looks, so it is—if she had a thought mair colour, poor dear.'

'Well, well,' said Mowbray impatiently, 'let me alone to reconcile a woman and a fine dress.'

'To be sure, ye ken best,' said the writer; 'but, after a', now, wad it no be better to lay by this hundred pound in Tam Turnpenny's, in case the young lady should want it afterhand, just for a sair foot?'

'You are a fool, Mick; what signifies healing a sore foot, when there will be a broken heart in the case? No, no—get the things as I desire you; we will blaze them down for one day at least; perhaps it will be the beginning of a proper dash.'

'Weel, weel, I wish it may be so,' answered Meiklewham; 'but this young earl—hae ye found the weak point? Can ye get a decerniture against him, with expenses?—that is the question.'

'I wish I could answer it,' said Mowbray thoughtfully. 'Confound the fellow, he is a cut above me in rank, and in society too—belongs to the great clubs, and is in with the superlatives and inaccessibles, and all that sort of folk. My training has been a peg lower, but, hang it, there are better dogs bred in the kennel than in the parlour. I am up to him, I think—at least I will soon know, Mick, whether I am or no, and that is always one comfort. Never mind, do you execute my commission, and take care you name no names—I must save my little abigail's reputation.'

They parted, Meiklewham to execute his patron's commission—his patron to bring to the test those hopes, the uncertainty of which he could not disguise from his own sagacity.

Trusting to the continuance of his run of luck, Mowbray resolved to bring affairs to a crisis that same evening. Everything seemed in the outset to favour his purpose. They had dined together in Lord Etherington's apartments—his state of health interfered with the circulation of the bottle, and a drizzly autumnal evening rendered walking disagreeable, even had they gone no farther than the private stable where Lord Etherington's horses were kept, under the care of a groom of superior skill. Cards were naturally, almost necessarily, resorted to, as the only alternative for helping away the evening, and piquet was, as formerly, chosen for the game.

Lord Etherington seemed at first indolently careless and indifferent about his play, suffering advantages to escape him, of which, in a more attentive state of mind, he could not have failed to avail himself. Mowbray upbraided him with his inattention, and proposed a deeper stake, in order to interest him. The young nobleman complied; and in the course of a few hands, the gamesters became both deeply engaged in watching and profiting by the changes of fortune. These were so many, so varied, and so unexpected, that the very souls of the players seemed at length centred in the event of the struggle; and, by dint of doubling stakes, the accumulated sum of a thousand pounds and upwards, upon each side, came to be staked in the issue of the game. So large a risk included all those funds which Mowbray commanded by his sister's kindness, and nearly all his previous winnings, so to him the alternative was victory or ruin. He could not hide his agitation, however desirous to do so. He drank wine to supply himself with courage—he drank water to cool his agitation; and at length bent himself to play with as much care and attention as he felt himself enabled to command.

In the first part of the game their luck appeared tolerably equal, and the play of both befitting gamesters who had dared to place such a sum on the cast. But, as it drew towards a conclusion, fortune altogether deserted him

who stood most in need of her favour, and Mowbray, with silent despair, saw his fate depend on a single trick, and that with every odds against him, for Lord Etherington was elder hand. But how can fortune's favour secure any one who is not true to himself? By an infraction of the laws of the game, which could only have been expected from the veriest bungler that ever touched a card, Lord Etherington called a point without showing it, and, by the ordinary rule, Mowbray was entitled to count his own—and in the course of that and the next hand, gained the game and swept the stakes. Lord Etherington showed chagrin and displeasure, and seemed to think that the rigour of the game had been more insisted upon than in courtesy it ought to have been, when men were playing for so small a stake. Mowbray did not understand this logic. A thousand pounds, he said, were in his eyes no nut-shells; the rules of piquet were insisted on by all but boys and women; and for his part, he had rather not play at all than not play the game.

'So it would seem, my dear Mowbray,' said the earl; 'for on my soul, I never saw so disconsolate a visage as thine during that unlucky game—it withdrew all my attention from my hand; and I may safely say, your rueful countenance has stood me in a thousand pounds. If I could transfer thy long visage to canvas, I should have both my revenge and my money; for a correct resemblance would be worth not a penny less than the original has cost me.'

'You are welcome to your jest, my lord,' said Mowbray, 'it has been well paid for; and I will serve you in ten thousand at the same rate. What say you?' he proceeded, taking up and shuffling the cards, 'will you do yourself more justice in another game?—Revenge, they say, is sweet.'

'I have no appetite for it this evening,' said the earl gravely; 'if I had, Mowbray, you might come by the worse. I do not *always* call a point without showing it.'

'Your lordship is out of humour with yourself for a blunder that might happen to any man—it was as much my good luck as a good hand would have been, and so Fortune be praised.'

'But what if with this Fortune had naught to do?' replied Lord Etherington. 'What if, sitting down with

an honest fellow and a friend like yourself, Mowbray, a man should rather choose to lose his own money, which he could afford, than to win what it might distress his friend to part with ? '

' Supposing a case so far out of supposition, my lord,' answered Mowbray, who felt the question ticklish—' for, with submission, the allegation is easily made, and is totally incapable of proof—I should say, no one had a right to think for me in such a particular, or to suppose that I played for a higher stake than was convenient.'

' And thus your friend, poor devil,' replied Lord Etherington, ' would lose his money, and run the risk of a quarrel into the boot ! We will try it another way—Suppose this good-humoured and simple-minded gamester had a favour of the deepest import to ask of his friend, and judged it better to prefer his request to a winner than to a loser ? '

' If this applies to me, my lord,' replied Mowbray, ' it is necessary I should learn how I can oblige your lordship.'

' That is a word soon spoken, but so difficult to be recalled, that I am almost tempted to pause—but yet it must be said. Mowbray, you have a sister.'

Mowbray started. ' I have indeed a sister, my lord ; but I can conceive no case in which her name can enter with propriety into our present discussion.'

' Again in the menacing mood ! ' said Lord Etherington, in his former tone ; ' now here is a pretty fellow—he would first cut my throat for having won a thousand pounds from me, and then for offering to make his sister a countess ! '

' A countess, my lord ? ' said Mowbray ; ' you are but jesting—you have never even seen Clara Mowbray.'

' Perhaps not—but what then ? I may have seen her picture, as Puff says in the *Critic*, or fallen in love with her from rumour—or, to save further supposition, as I see they render you impatient, I may be satisfied with knowing that she is a beautiful and accomplished young lady, with a large fortune.'

' What fortune do you mean, my lord ? ' said Mowbray, recollecting with alarm some claims, which, according to Meiklewham's view of the subject, his sister might form upon his property. ' What estate ?—there is nothing belongs to our family save these lands of St. Ronan's, or

what is left of them; and of these I am, my lord, an undoubted heir of entail in possession.'

'Be it so,' said the earl, 'for I have no claim on your mountain realms here, which are, doubtless,

> 'renown'd of old
> For knights, and squires, and barons bold;

my views respect a much richer, though less romantic domain—a large manor, hight Nettlewood. House, old, but standing in the midst of such glorious oaks—three thousand acres of land, arable, pasture, and woodland, exclusive of the two closes, occupied by Widow Hodge and Goodman Trampclod—manorial rights—mines and minerals—and the devil knows how many good things beside, all lying in the vale of Bever.'

'And what has my sister to do with all this?' asked Mowbray, in great surprise.

'Nothing; but that it belongs to her when she becomes Countess of Etherington.'

'It is, then, your lordship's property already?'

'No, by Jove! nor can it, unless your sister honours me with her approbation of my suit,' replied the earl.

'This is a sorer puzzle than one of Lady Penelope's charades, my lord,' said Mr. Mowbray; 'I must call in the assistance of the Reverend Mr. Chatterly.'

'You shall not need,' said Lord Etherington; 'I will give you the key, but listen to me with patience. You know that we nobles of England, less jealous of our sixteen quarters than those on the continent, do not take scorn to line our decayed ermines with a little cloth of gold from the city; and my grandfather was lucky enough to get a wealthy wife, with a halting pedigree,—rather a singular circumstance, considering that her father was a countryman of yours. She had a brother, however, still more wealthy than herself, and who increased his fortune by continuing to carry on the trade which had first enriched his family. At length he summed up his books, washed his hands of commerce, and retired to Nettlewood, to become a gentleman; and here my much respected grand-uncle was seized with the rage of making himself a man of consequence. He tried what marrying a woman of family would do;

but he soon found that whatever advantage his family might derive from his doing so, his own condition was but little illustrated. He next resolved to become a man of family himself. His father had left Scotland when very young, and bore, I blush to say, the vulgar name of Scrogie. This hapless disyllable my uncle carried in person to the herald office in Scotland; but neither Lyon, nor Marchmont, nor Islay, nor Snadoun, neither herald nor pursuivant, would patronize Scrogie. Scrogie!—there could nothing be made out of it—so that my worthy relative had recourse to the surer side of the house, and began to found his dignity on his mother's name of Mowbray. In this he was much more successful, and I believe some sly fellow stole for him a slip from your own family tree, Mr. Mowbray of St. Ronan's, which, I dare say, you have never missed. At any rate, for his *argent* and *or*, he got a handsome piece of parchment, blazoned with a white lion for Mowbray, to be borne quarterly, with three stunted or scrog-bushes for Scrogie, and became thenceforth Mr. Scrogie Mowbray, or rather, as he subscribed himself, Reginald (his former Christian name was Ronald) S. Mowbray. He had a son who most undutifully laughed at all this, refused the honours of the high name of Mowbray, and insisted on retaining his father's original appellative of Scrogie, to the great annoyance of his said father's ears, and damage of his temper.'

'Why, faith, betwixt the two,' said Mowbray, 'I own I should have preferred my own name, and I think the old gentleman's taste rather better than the young one's.'

'True; but both wilful, absurd originals, with a happy obstinacy of temper, whether derived from Mowbray or Scrogie I know not, but which led them so often into opposition, that the offended father, Reginald S. Mowbray, turned his recusant son, Scrogie, fairly out of doors; and the fellow would have paid for his plebeian spirit with a vengeance, had he not found refuge with a surviving partner of the original Scrogie of all, who still carried on the lucrative branch of traffic by which the family had been first enriched. I mention these particulars to account, in so far as I can, for the singular predicament in which I now find myself placed.'

'Proceed, my lord,' said Mr. Mowbray; 'there is no denying the singularity of your story, and I presume you are quite serious in giving me such an extraordinary detail.'

'Entirely so, upon my honour—and a most serious matter it is, you will presently find. When my worthy uncle, Mr. S. Mowbray (for I will not call him Scrogie even in the grave), paid his debts to nature, everybody concluded he would be found to have disinherited his son, the unfilial Scrogie, and so far everybody was right—But it was also generally believed that he would settle the estate on my father, Lord Etherington, the son of his sister, and therein every one was wrong. For my excellent granduncle had pondered with himself, that the favoured name of Mowbray would take no advantage, and attain no additional elevation, if his estate of Nettlewood (otherwise called Mowbray Park) should descend to our family without any condition; and with the assistance of a sharp attorney, he settled it on me, then a schoolboy, *on condition* that I should, before attaining the age of twenty-five complete, take unto myself in holy wedlock a young lady of good fame, of the name of Mowbray, and, by preference, of the house of St. Ronan's, should a damsel of that house exist. Now my riddle is read.'

'And a very extraordinary one it is,' replied Mowbray thoughtfully.

'Confess the truth,' said Lord Etherington, laying his hand on his shoulder; 'you think the story will bear a grain of a scruple of doubt, if not a whole scruple itself?'

'At least, my lord,' answered Mowbray, 'your lordship will allow, that, being Miss Mowbray's only near relation, and sole guardian, I may, without offence, pause upon a suit for her hand, made under such odd circumstances.'

'If you have the least doubt either respecting my rank or fortune, I can give, of course, the most satisfactory references,' said the Earl of Etherington.

'That I can easily believe, my lord,' said Mowbray; 'nor do I in the least fear deception, where detection would be so easy. Your lordship's proceedings towards me, too' (with a conscious glance at the bills he still held in his hand), 'have, I admit, been such as to intimate some such deep cause of interest as you have been pleased to

state. But it seems strange that your lordship should have permitted years to glide away, without so much as inquiring after the young lady, who, I believe, is the only person qualified, as your granduncle's will requires, with whom you can form an alliance. It appears to me that, long before now, this matter ought to have been investigated; and that, even now, it would have been more natural and more decorous to have at least seen my sister before proposing for her hand.'

'On the first point, my dear Mowbray,' said Lord Etherington, 'I am free to own to you, that, without meaning your sister the least affront, I would have got rid of this clause if I could; for every man would fain choose a wife for himself, and I feel no hurry to marry at all. But the rogue-lawyers, after taking fees, and keeping me in hand for years, have at length roundly told me the clause must be complied with, or Nettlewood must have another master. So I thought it best to come down here in person in order to address the fair lady; but as accident has hitherto prevented my seeing her, and as I found in her brother a man who understands the world, I hope you will not think the worse of me, that I have endeavoured in the outset to make you my friend. Truth is, I shall be twenty-five in the course of a month; and without your favour, and the opportunities which only you can afford me, that seems a short time to woo and win a lady of Miss Mowbray's merit.'

'And what is the alternative if you do not form this proposed alliance, my lord?' said Mowbray.

'The bequest of my grand-uncle lapses,' said the earl, 'and fair Nettlewood, with its old house, and older oaks, manorial rights, Hodge Trampelod, and all, devolves on a certain cousin-german of mine, whom Heaven of his mercy confound!'

'You have left yourself little time to prevent such an event, my lord,' said Mowbray; 'but things being as I now see them, you shall have what interest I can give you in the affair. We must stand, however, on more equal terms, my lord—I will condescend so far as to allow it would have been inconvenient for me at this moment to have lost that game, but I cannot in the circumstances think of

acting as if I had fairly won it. We must draw stakes, my lord.'

'Not a word of that, if you really mean me kindly, my dear Mowbray. The blunder was a real one, for I was indeed thinking, as you may suppose, on other things than the showing my point—All was fairly lost and won. I hope I shall have opportunities of offering real services, which may perhaps give me some right to your partial regard—at present we are on equal footing on all sides—perfectly so.'

'If your lordship thinks so,' said Mowbray,—and then passing rapidly to what he felt he could say with more confidence,—'Indeed, at any rate, no personal obligation to myself could prevent my doing my full duty as guardian to my sister.'

'Unquestionably, I desire nothing else,' replied the Earl of Etherington.

'I must therefore understand that your lordship is quite serious in your proposal; and that it is not to be withdrawn, even if upon acquaintance with Miss Mowbray, you should not perhaps think her so deserving of your lordship's attentions, as report may have spoken her.'

'Mr. Mowbray,' replied the earl, 'the treaty between you and me shall be as definite as if I were a sovereign prince, demanding in marriage the sister of a neighbouring monarch, whom, according to royal etiquette, he neither has seen nor could see. I have been quite frank with you, and I have stated to you that my present motives for entering upon negotiation are not personal, but territorial; when I know Miss Mowbray, I have no doubt they will be otherwise. I have heard she is beautiful.'

'Something of the palest, my lord,' answered Mowbray. 'A fine complexion is the first attraction which is lost in the world of fashion, and that which it is easiest to replace.'

'Dispositions, my lord, may differ,' said Mowbray, 'without faults on either side. I presume your lordship has inquired into my sister's. She is amiable, accomplished, sensible, and high-spirited; but yet'——

'I understand you, Mr. Mowbray, and will spare you the pain of speaking out. I have heard Miss Mowbray is in some respects—particular; to use a broader word—a

little whimsical. No matter. She will have the less to learn when she becomes a countess, and a woman of fashion.'

'Are you serious, my lord?' said Mowbray.

'I am—and I will speak my mind still more plainly. I have a good temper, and excellent spirits, and can endure a good deal of singularity in those I live with. I have no doubt your sister and I will live happily together—But in case it should prove otherwise, arrangements may be made previously, which will enable us in certain circumstances to live happily apart. My own estate is large, and Nettlewood will bear dividing.'

'Nay, then,' said Mowbray, 'I have little more to say—nothing indeed remains for inquiry, so far as your lordship is concerned. But my sister must have free liberty of choice—so far as I am concerned, your lordship's suit has my interest.'

'And I trust we may consider it as a done thing?'

'With Clara's approbation—certainly,' answered Mowbray.

'I trust there is no chance of personal repugnance on the young lady's part?' said the young peer.

'I anticipate nothing of the kind, my lord,' answered Mowbray, 'as I presume there is no reason for any; but young ladies will be capricious, and if Clara, after I have done and said all that a brother ought to do, should remain repugnant, there is a point in the exertion of my influence which it would be cruelty to pass.'

The Earl of Etherington walked a turn through the apartment, then paused, and said, in a grave and doubtful tone, 'In the meanwhile, I am bound, and the young lady is free, Mowbray. Is this quite fair?'

'It is what happens in every case, my lord, where a gentleman proposes for a lady,' answered Mowbray; 'he must remain, of course, bound by his offer, until, within a reasonable time, it is accepted or rejected. It is not my fault that your lordship has declared your wishes to me, before ascertaining Clara's inclination. But while as yet the matter is between ourselves—I make you welcome to draw back if you think proper. Clara Mowbray needs not push for a catch-match.'

'Nor do I desire,' said the young nobleman, 'any time to reconsider the resolution which I have confided to you. I am not in the least fearful that I shall change my mind on seeing your sister, and I am ready to stand by the proposal which I have made to you. If, however, you feel so extremely delicately on my account,' he continued, 'I can see and even converse with Miss Mowbray at this fête of yours, without the necessity of being at all presented to her—The character which I have assumed in a manner obliges me to wear a mask.'

'Certainly,' said the laird of St. Ronan's, 'and I am glad, for both our sakes, your lordship thinks of taking a little law upon this occasion.'

'I shall profit nothing by it,' said the earl; 'my doom is fixed before I start—but if this mode of managing the matter will save your conscience, I have no objection to it—it cannot consume much time, which is what I have to look to.'

They then shook hands and parted, without any further discourse which could interest the reader.

Mowbray was glad to find himself alone, in order to think over what had happened, and to ascertain the state of his own mind, which at present was puzzling even to himself. He could not but feel that much greater advantages of every kind might accrue to himself and his family from the alliance of the wealthy young earl, than could have been derived from any share of his spoils which he had proposed to gain by superior address in play, or greater skill on the turf. But his pride was hurt when he recollected, that he had placed himself entirely in Lord Etherington's power; and the escape from absolute ruin which he had made, solely by the sufferance of his opponent, had nothing in it consolatory to his wounded feelings. He was lowered in his own eyes, when he recollected how completely the proposed victim of his ingenuity had seen through his schemes, and only abstained from baffling them entirely, because to do so suited best with his own. There was a shade of suspicion, too, which he could not entirely eradicate from his mind. What occasion had this young nobleman to preface, by the voluntary loss of a brace of thousands, a proposal which must have been acceptable in itself,

without any such sacrifice ? And why should he, after all, have been so eager to secure his accession to the proposed alliance, before he had ever seen the lady who was the object of it ? However hurried for time, he might have waited the event at least of the entertainment at Shaws Castle, at which Clara was necessarily obliged to make her appearance. Yet such conduct, however unusual, was equally inconsistent with any sinister intentions ; since the sacrifice of a large sum of money, and the declaration of his views upon a portionless young lady of family, could scarcely be the preface to any unfair practice. So that, upon the whole, Mowbray settled, that what was uncommon in the earl's conduct arose from the hasty and eager disposition of a rich young Englishman, to whom money is of little consequence, and who is too headlong in pursuit of the favourite plan of the moment, to proceed in the most rational or most ordinary manner. If, however, there should prove anything further in the matter than he could at present discover, Mowbray promised himself that the utmost circumspection on his part could not fail to discover it, and that in full time to prevent any ill consequences to his sister or himself.

Immersed in such cogitations, he avoided the inquisitive presence of Mr. Meiklewham, who, as usual, had been watching for him to learn how matters were going on ; and although it was now late, he mounted his horse, and rode hastily to Shaws Castle. On the way, he deliberated with himself whether to mention to his sister the application which had been made to him, in order to prepare her to receive the young earl as a suitor favoured with her brother's approbation. 'But no, no, no ;' such was the result of his contemplation. 'She might take it into her head that his thoughts were bent less upon having her for a countess, than on obtaining possession of his grand-uncle's estate. We must keep quiet,' concluded he, 'until her personal appearance and accomplishments may appear at least to have some influence upon his choice. We must say nothing till this blessed entertainment has been given and received.'

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER

> Has he so long held out with me untired,
> And stops he now for breath ?—Well—Be it so.
> *Richard III.*

MOWBRAY had no sooner left the earl's apartment, than the latter commenced an epistle to a friend and associate, which we lay before the reader, as best calculated to illustrate the views and motives of the writer. It was addressed to Captain Jekyl, of the —— regiment of Guards, at the Green Dragon, Harrogate, and was of the following tenor :—

'DEAR HARRY,

'I have expected you here these ten days past, anxiously as ever man was looked for ; and have now to charge your absence as high treason to your sworn allegiance. Surely you do not presume, like one of Napoleon's new-made monarchs, to grumble for independence, as if your greatness were of your own making, or as if I had picked you out of the whole of St. James's coffee-house to hold my back-hand, for your sake, forsooth, not for my own ? Wherefore, lay aside all your own proper business, be it the pursuit of dowagers, or the plucking of pigeons, and instantly repair to this place, where I may speedily want your assistance. *May* want it, said I ? Why, most negligent of friends and allies, I *have* wanted it already, and that when it might have done me yeoman's service. Know that I have had an affair since I came hither—have got hurt myself, and have nearly shot my friend ; and if I had, I might have been hanged for it, for want of Harry Jekyl to bear witness in my favour. I was so far on my road to this place, when, not choosing, for certain reasons, to pass through the old village, I struck by a footpath into the woods which separate it from the new spa, leaving my carriage and people to go the carriage-way. I had not walked half a mile when I heard the footsteps of some one behind, and, looking round, what

should I behold but the face in the world which I most cordially hate and abhor—I mean that which stands on the shoulders of my right trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor, St. Francis. He seemed as much confounded as I was at our unexpected meeting; and it was a minute ere he found breath to demand what I did in Scotland, contrary to my promise, as he was pleased to express it. I retaliated, and charged him with being here, in contradiction to his. He justified, and said he had only come down upon the express information that I was upon my road to Saint Ronan's. Now, Harry, how the devil should he have known this, hadst thou been quite faithful? for I am sure, to no ear but thine own did I breathe a whisper of my purpose. Next, with the insolent assumption of superiority, which he founds on what he calls the rectitude of his purpose, he proposed we should both withdraw from a neighbourhood into which we could bring nothing but wretchedness. I have told you how difficult it is to cope with the calm and resolute manner that the devil gifts him with on such occasions; but I was determined he should not carry the day this time. I saw no chance for it, however, but to put myself into a towering passion, which, thank Heaven, I can always do on short notice. I charged him with having imposed formerly on my youth, and made himself judge of my rights; and I accompanied my defiance with the strongest terms of irony and contempt, as well as with demand of instant satisfaction. I had my travelling pistols with me (*et pour cause*), and, to my surprise, my gentleman was equally provided. For fair play's sake, I made him take one of my pistols—right Kuchenritters—a brace of balls in each, but that circumstance I forgot. I would fain have argued the matter a little longer; but I thought at the time, and think still, that the best arguments which he and I can exchange, must come from the point of the sword, or the muzzle of the pistol. We fired nearly together, and I think both dropped—I am sure I did, but recovered in a minute, with a damaged arm and a scratch on the temple—it was the last which stunned me—so much for double-loaded pistols. My friend was invisible, and I had nothing for it but to walk to the spa, bleeding all the way like a calf, and tell a raw-head-and-bloody-bone

story about a footpad, which, but for my earldom, and my gory locks, no living soul would have believed.

'Shortly after, when I had been installed in a sick-room, I had the mortification to learn, that my own impatience had brought all this mischief upon me, at a moment when I had every chance of getting rid of my friend without trouble, had I but let him go on his own errand; for it seems he had an appointment that morning with a booby baronet, who is said to be a bullet-slitter, and would perhaps have rid me of St. Francis without any trouble or risk on my part. Meantime, his non-appearance at this rendezvous has placed Master Francis Tyrrel, as he chooses to call himself, in the worst odour possible with the gentry at the spring, who have denounced him as a coward and no gentleman. What to think of the business myself, I know not; and I much want your assistance to see what can have become of this fellow, who, like a spectre of ill omen, has so often thwarted and baffled my best plans. My own confinement renders me inactive, though my wound is fast healing. Dead he cannot be; for had he been mortally wounded, we should have heard of him somewhere or other—he could not have vanished from the earth like a bubble of the elements. Well and sound he cannot be; for, besides that I am sure I saw him stagger and drop, firing his pistol as he fell, I know him well enough to swear that had he not been severely wounded, he would have first pestered me with his accursed presence and assistance, and then walked forward with his usual composure to settle matters with Sir Bingo Binks. No—no—St. Francis is none of those who leave such jobs half finished—it is but doing him justice to say, he has the devil's courage to back his own deliberate impertinence. But then, if wounded severely, he must be still in this neighbourhood, and probably in concealment—this is what I must discover, and I want your assistance in my inquiries among the natives. Haste hither, Harry, as ever you look for good at my hand.

'A good player, Harry, always studies to make the best of bad cards—and so I have endeavoured to turn my wound to some account; and it has given me the opportunity to secure Monsieur le frère in my interests. You may say

very truly, that it is of consequence to me to know the character of this new actor on the disordered scene of my adventures. Know, then, he is that most incongruous of all monsters—a Scotch buck—how far from being buck of the season you may easily judge. Every point of national character is opposed to the pretensions of this luckless race, when they attempt to take on them a personage which is assumed with so much facility by their brethren of the Isle of Saints. They are a shrewd people, indeed, but so destitute of ease, grace, pliability of manners, and insinuation of address, that they eternally seem to suffer actual misery in their attempts to look gay and careless. Then their pride heads them back at one turn, their poverty at another, their pedantry at a third, their *mauvaise honte* at a fourth; and with so many obstacles to make them bolt off the course, it is positively impossible they should win the plate. No, Harry, it is the grave folk in old England who have to fear a Caledonian invasion—they will make no conquests in the world of fashion. Excellent bankers the Scots may be, for they are eternally calculating how to add interest to principal;—good soldiers, for they are, if not such heroes as they would be thought, as brave, I suppose, as their neighbours, and much more amenable to discipline;—lawyers they are born; indeed every country gentleman is bred one, and their patient and crafty disposition enables them, in other lines, to submit to hardships which other natives could not bear, and avail themselves of advantages which others would let pass under their noses unavailingly. But assuredly Heaven did not form the Caledonian for the gay world; and his efforts at ease, grace, and gaiety, resemble only the clumsy gambols of the ass in the fable. Yet the Scot has his sphere too (in his own country only), where the character which he assumes is allowed to pass current. This Mowbray, now—this brother-in-law of mine,—might do pretty well at a Northern Meeting, or the Leith races, where he could give five minutes to the sport of the day, and the next half-hour to country politics, or to farming; but it is scarce necessary to tell you, Harry, that this half fellowship will not pass on the better side of the Tweed.

'Yet, for all I have told you, this trout was not easily tickled; nor should I have made much of him, had he not,

in the plenitude of his northern conceit, entertained that notion of my being a good subject of plunder, which you had contrived (blessing on your contriving brain!) to insinuate into him by means of Wolverine. He commenced this hopeful experiment, and as you must have anticipated, caught a Tartar with a vengeance. Of course, I used my victory only so far as to secure his interest in accomplishing my principal object; and yet I could see my gentleman's pride was so much injured in the course of the negotiation, that not all the advantages which the match offered to his damned family were able entirely to subdue the chagrin arising from his defeat. He did gulp it down, though, and we are friends and allies for the present at least—not so cordially so, however, as to induce me to trust him with the whole of the strangely complicated tale. The circumstance of the will it was necessary to communicate, as affording a sufficiently strong reason for urging my suit; and this partial disclosure enabled me for the present to dispense with further confidence.

'You will observe, that I stand by no means secure; and besides the chance of my cousin's reappearance—a certain event, unless he is worse than I dare hope for—I have perhaps to expect the fantastic repugnance of Clara herself, or some sulky freak on her brother's part. In a word—and let it be such a one as conjurers raise the devil with—Harry Jekyl, I *want* you.

'As well knowing the nature of my friend, I can assure you that his own interest, as well as mine, may be advanced by his coming hither on duty. Here is a blockhead whom I already mentioned, Sir Bingo Binks, with whom something may be done worth *your* while, though scarce worth *mine*. The baronet is a perfect buzzard, and when I came here he was under Mowbray's training But the awkward Scot had plucked half a dozen penfeathers from his wing with so little precaution, that the baronet has become frightened and shy, and is now in the act of rebelling against Mowbray, whom he both hates and fears—the least backing from a knowing hand like you, and the bird becomes your own, feathers and all. Moreover,

'by my life,
This Bingo hath a mighty pretty wife.

A lovely woman, Harry—rather plump, and above the middle size—quite your taste. A Juno in beauty, looking with such scorn on her husband, whom she despises and hates, and seeming as if she *could* look so differently on any one whom she might like better, that, on my faith, 'twere sin not to give her occasion. If you please to venture your luck, either with the knight or the lady, you shall have fair play, and no interference—that is, provided you appear upon this summons; for, otherwise, I may be so placed, that the affairs of the knight and the lady may fall under my own immediate cognizance. And so, Harry, if you wish to profit by these hints, you had best make haste, as well for your own concerns, as to assist me in mine.

'Yours, Harry, as you behave yourself,

'ETHERINGTON.'

Having finished this eloquent and instructive epistle, the young earl demanded the attendance of his own valet, Solmes, whom he charged to put it into the post office without delay, and with his own hand.

CHAPTER XX

THEATRICALS

The play 's the thing.—*Hamlet.*

THE important day had now arrived, the arrangements for which had for some time occupied all the conversation and thoughts of the good company at the Well of Saint Ronan's. To give it, at the same time, a degree of novelty and consequence, Lady Penelope Penfeather had long since suggested to Mr. Mowbray that the more gifted and accomplished part of the guests might contribute to furnish out entertainment for the rest, by acting a few scenes of some popular drama; an accomplishment in which her self-conceit assured her that she was peculiarly qualified to excel. Mr. Mowbray, who seemed on this occasion to have thrown the reins entirely into her ladyship's hands, made no objection to the plan which she proposed, excepting

that the old-fashioned hedges and walks of the garden at Shaws Castle must necessarily serve for stage and scenery, as there was no time to fit up the old hall for the exhibition of the proposed theatricals.[1] But upon inquiry among the company, this plan was wrecked upon the ordinary shelve, to wit, the difficulty of finding performers who would consent to assume the lower characters of the drama. For the first parts there were candidates more than enough; but most of these were greatly too high-spirited to play the fool, except they were permitted to top the part. Then amongst the few unambitious underlings, who could be coaxed or cajoled to undertake subordinate characters, there were so many bad memories, and short memories, and treacherous memories, that at length the plan was resigned in despair.

A substitute proposed by Lady Penelope was next considered. It was proposed to act what the Italians call a Comedy of Character; that is, not an exact drama, in which the actors deliver what is set down for them by the author; but one in which, the plot having been previously fixed upon, and a few striking scenes adjusted, the actors are expected to supply the dialogue extempore, or, as Petruchio says, from their mother wit. This is an amusement which affords much entertainment in Italy, particularly in the state of Venice, where the characters of their drama have been long since all previously fixed, and are handed down by tradition; and this species of drama, though rather belonging to the mask than the theatre, is distinguished by the name of Commedia dell' Arte.[2] But the shame-faced character of Britons is still more alien from a species of display where there is a constant and extemporaneous demand for wit, or the sort of ready small-talk

[1] At Kilruddery, the noble seat of Lord Meath, in the county of Wicklow, there is a situation for private theatrical exhibitions in the open air, planted out with the evergreens which arise there in the most luxuriant magnificence. It has a wild and romantic effect, reminding one of the scene in which Bottom rehearsed his pageant, with a green plot for a stage, and a hawthorn brake for a tiring-room.

[2] See Mr. William Stewart Rose's very interesting *Letters from the North of Italy*, vol. i, Letter XXX, where this curious subject is treated with the information and precision which distinguish that accomplished author.

which supplies its place, than from the regular exhibitions of the drama, where the author, standing responsible for language and sentiment, leaves to the personators of the scenes only the trouble of finding enunciation and action.

But the ardent and active spirit of Lady Penelope, still athirst after novelty, though baffled in her two first projects, brought forward a third, in which she was more successful. This was the proposal to combine a certain number, at least, of the guests, properly dressed for the occasion, as representing some well-known historical or dramatic characters, in a group having reference to history, or to a scene of the drama. In this representation, which may be called playing a picture, action, even pantomimical action, was not expected; and all that was required of the performers, was to throw themselves into such a group as might express a marked and striking point of an easily remembered scene, but where the actors are at a pause, and without either speech or motion. In this species of representation there was no tax either on the invention or memory of those who might undertake parts; and, what recommended it still further to the good company, there was no marked difference betwixt the hero and heroine of the group, and the less distinguished characters by whom they were attended on the stage; and every one who had confidence in a handsome shape and a becoming dress, might hope, though standing in not quite so broad and favourable a light as the principal personages, to draw, nevertheless, a considerable portion of attention and applause. This motion, therefore, that the company, or such of them as might choose to appear properly dressed for the occasion, should form themselves into one or more groups, which might be renewed and varied as often as they pleased, was hailed and accepted as a bright idea, which assigned to every one a share of the importance attached to its probable success.

Mowbray, on his side, promised to contrive some arrangement which should separate the actors in this mute drama from the spectators, and enable the former to vary the amusement, by withdrawing themselves from the scene, and again appearing upon it under a different and new combination. This plan of exhibition, where fine clothes

and affected attitudes supplied all draughts upon fancy or talent, was highly agreeable to most of the ladies present; and even Lady Binks, whose discontent seemed proof against every effort that could be proposed to soothe it, acquiesced in the project, with perfect indifference indeed, but with something less of sullenness than usual.

It now only remained to rummage the circulating library, for some piece of sufficient celebrity to command attention, and which should be at the same time suited to the execution of their project. Bell's *British Theatre*, Miller's *Modern and Ancient Drama*, and about twenty old volumes, in which stray tragedies and comedies were associated, like the passengers in a mail-coach, without the least attempt at selection or arrangement, were all examined in the course of their researches. But Lady Penelope declared loftily and decidedly for Shakespeare, as the author whose immortal works were fresh in every one's recollection. Shakespeare was therefore chosen, and from his works the Midsummer Night's Dream was selected, as the play which afforded the greatest variety of characters, and most scope of course for the intended representation. An active competition presently occurred among the greater part of the company, for such copies of the Midsummer Night's Dream, or the volume of Shakespeare containing it, as could be got in the neighbourhood; for, notwithstanding Lady Penelope's declaration, that every one who could read had Shakespeare's plays by heart, it appeared that such of his dramas as have not kept possession of the stage, were very little known at Saint Ronan's, save among those people who are emphatically called readers.

The adjustment of the parts was the first subject of consideration, so soon as those who intended to assume characters had refreshed their recollection on the subject of the piece. Theseus was unanimously assigned to Mowbray, the giver of the entertainment, and therefore justly entitled to represent the Duke of Athens. The costume of an Amazonian crest and plume, a tucked-up vest, and a tight buskin of sky-blue silk, buckled with diamonds, reconciled Lady Binks to the part of Hippolyta. The superior stature of Miss Mowbray to Lady Penelope, made it necessary that the former should perform the part

of Helena, and her ladyship rest contented with the shrewish character of Hermia. It was resolved to compliment the young Earl of Etherington with the part of Lysander, which, however, his lordship declined, and, preferring comedy to tragedy, refused to appear in any other character than that of the magnanimous Bottom; and he gave them such a humorous specimen of his quality in that part, that all were delighted at once with his condescension in assuming, and his skill in performing, the presenter of Pyramus.

The part of Egeus was voted to Captain MacTurk, whose obstinacy in refusing to appear in any other than the full Highland garb, had nearly disconcerted the whole affair. At length this obstacle was got over, on the authority of Childe Harold, who remarks the similarity betwixt the Highland and Grecian costume;[1] and the company, dispensing with the difference of colour, voted the captain's variegated kilt, of the MacTurk tartan, to be the kirtle of a Grecian mountaineer,—Egeus to be an Arnout, and the captain to be Egeus. Chatterly and the painter, walking gentlemen by profession, agreed to walk through the parts of Demetrius and Lysander, the two Athenian lovers; and Mr. Winterblossom, loath and lazy, after many excuses, was bribed by Lady Penelope with an antique, or supposed antique cameo, to play the part of Philostratus, master of the revels, provided his gout would permit him to remain so long upon the turf, which was to be their stage.

Muslin trousers, adorned with spangles, a voluminous turban of silver gauze, and wings of the same, together with an embroidered slipper, converted at once Miss Digges into Oberon, the King of Shadows, whose sovereign gravity, however, was somewhat indifferently represented by the silly gaiety of Miss in her Teens, and the uncontrolled delight which she felt in her fine clothes. A younger sister

[1] 'The Arnaults, or Albanese,' says Lord Byron, 'struck me by their resemblance to the Highlanders of Scotland, in dress, figure, and manner of living. Their very mountains seem Caledonian, but a milder climate. The kilt, though white, the spare, active form, their dialect Celtic in the sound, and their hardy habits, all carried me back to Morven.'—*Notes to the Second Chapter of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

represented Titania ; and two or three subordinate elves were selected, among families attending the salutiferous fountain, who were easily persuaded to let their children figure in fine clothes at so juvenile an age, though they shook their head at Miss Digges and her pantaloons, and no less at the liberal display of Lady Binks's right leg, with which the Amazonian garb gratified the public of Saint Ronan's.

Dr. Quackleben was applied to to play Wall, by the assistance of such a wooden horse, or screen, as clothes are usually dried upon ; the old attorney stood for Lion ; and the other characters of Bottom's drama were easily found among the unnamed frequenters of the Spring. Dressed rehearsals, and so forth, went merrily on—all voted there was a play fitted.

But even the doctor's eloquence could not press Mrs. Blower into the scheme, although she was particularly wanted to represent Thisbe.

'Truth is,' she replied, 'I dinna greatly like stage-plays. John Blower, honest man, as sailors are ay for some spree or another, wad take me ance to see ane Mrs. Siddons —I thought we should hae been crushed to death before we gat in—a' my things riven aff my back, forby the four lily-white shillings that it cost us—and then in came three frightsome carlines wi' besoms, and they wad bewitch a sailor's wife—I was lang eneugh there—and out I wad be, and out John Blower gat me, but wi' nae sma' fight and fend. My Lady Penelope Penfitter, and the great folk, may just take it as they like ; but in my mind, Dr. Cacklehen, it 's a mere blasphemy for folk to gar themselves look otherwise than their Maker made them ; and then the changing the name which was given them at baptism, is, I think, an awful falling away from our vows ; and though Thisby, which I take to be Greek for Tibbie, may be a very good name, yet Margaret was I christened, and Margaret will I die.'

'You mistake the matter entirely, my dear Mrs. Blower,' said the doctor ; 'there is nothing serious intended—a mere *placebo*—just a divertisement to cheer the spirits, and assist the effect of the waters : cheerfulness is a great promoter of health.'

'Dinna tell me o' health, Dr. Kittlepin! Can it be for the puir body M'Durk's health to major about in the tartans like a tobacconist's sign in a frosty morning, wi' his poor wizened houghs as blue as a blawart?—weel I wot he is a humbling spectacle. Or can it gie onybody health or pleasure either to see your ainsell, doctor, ganging about wi' a claise screen tied to your back, covered wi' paper, and painted like a stane and lime wa'? I'll gang to see nane of their vanities, Dr. Kittlehen; and if there is nae other decent body to take care o' me, as I dinna like to sit a haill afternoon by mysell, I'll e'en gae doun to Mr. Sowerbrowst the maltster's—he is a pleasant, sensible man, and a sponsible man in the world, and his sister 's a very decent woman.'

'Confound Sowerbrowst,' thought the doctor; 'if I had guessed he was to come across me thus, he should not have got the better of his dyspepsy so early. My dear Mrs. Blower,' he continued, but aloud, 'it is a foolish affair enough, I must confess; but every person of style and fashion at the Well has settled to attend this exhibition; there has been nothing else talked of for this month through the whole country, and it will be a year before it is forgotten. And I would have you consider how ill it will look, my dear Mrs. Blower, to stay away—nobody will believe you had a card—no, not though you were to hang it round your neck like a label round a vial of tincture, Mrs. Blower.'

'If ye thought *that*, Doctor Kickherben,' said the widow, alarmed at the idea of losing caste, 'I wad e'en gang to the show, like other folk; sinful and shameful if it be, let them that make the sin bear the shame. But then I will put on nane of their Popish disguises—me that has lived in North Leith, baith wife and lass, for I shanna say how mony years, and has a character to keep up baith with saint and sinner. And then, wha 's to take care of me, since you are gaun to make a lime-and-stane wa' of yoursell, Doctor Kickinben?'

'My dear Mrs. Blower, if such is your determination I will not make a wall of myself. Her ladyship must consider my profession—she must understand it is my function to look after my patients, in preference to all the stage-plays in this world—and to attend on a case like yours,

Mrs. Blower, it is my duty to sacrifice, were it called for, the whole drama from Shakespeare to O'Keefe.'

On hearing this magnanimous resolution, the widow's heart was greatly cheered; for, in fact, she might probably have considered the doctor's perseverance in the plan, of which she had expressed such high disapprobation, as little less than a symptom of absolute defection from his allegiance. By an accommodation, therefore, which suited both parties, it was settled that the doctor should attend his loving widow to Shaws Castle, without mask or mantle; and that the painted screen should be transferred from Quackleben's back to the broad shoulders of a briefless barrister, well qualified for the part of Wall, since the composition of his skull might have rivalled in solidity the mortar and stone of the most approved builder.

We must not pause to dilate upon the various labours of body and spirit which preceded the intervening space, betwixt the settlement of this gay scheme, and the time appointed to carry it into execution. We will not attempt to describe how the wealthy, by letter and by commissioners, urged their researches through the stores of the Gallery of Fashion for specimens of Oriental finery—how they that were scant of diamonds supplied their place with paste and Bristol stones—how the country dealers were driven out of patience by the demand for goods of which they had never before heard the name—and, lastly, how the busy fingers of the more economical damsels twisted handkerchiefs into turbans, and converted petticoats into pantaloons, shaped and sewed, cut and clipped, and spoiled many a decent gown and petticoat, to produce something like a Grecian habit. Who can describe the wonders wrought by active needles and scissors, aided by thimbles and thread, upon silver gauze, and sprigged muslin? or who can show how if the fair nymphs of the Spring did not entirely succeed in attaining the desired resemblance to heathen Greeks, they at least contrived to get rid of all similitude to sober Christians?

Neither is it necessary to dwell upon the various schemes of conveyance which were resorted to, in order to transfer the beau monde of the spa to the scene of revelry at Shaws Castle. These were as various as the fortunes and

pretensions of the owners ; from the lordly curricle, with its outriders, to the humble taxed cart, nay, untaxed cart, which conveyed the personages of lesser rank. For the latter, indeed, the two post-chaises at the inn seemed converted into hourly stages, so often did they come and go between the hotel and the castle—a glad day for the postilions, and a day of martyrdom for the poor post-horses ; so seldom is it that every department of any society, however constituted, can be injured or benefited by the same occurrence.

Such, indeed, was the penury of vehicular conveyance, that applications were made in manner most humble, even to Meg Dods herself, entreating she would permit her old whiskey to *ply* (for such might have been the phrase) at Saint Ronan's Well, for that day only, and that upon good cause shown. But not for sordid lucre would the undaunted spirit of Meg compound her feud with her neighbours of the detested Well. 'Her carriage,' she briefly replied, 'was engaged for her ain guest and the minister, and deil anither body's fit should gang intill't. Let every herring hing by its ain head.' And, accordingly, at the duly appointed hour, creaked forth the leathern convenience, in which, carefully screened by the curtain from the gaze of the fry of the village, sat Nabob Touchwood, in the costume of an Indian merchant, or Shroff, as they are termed. The clergyman would not, perhaps, have been so punctual, had not a set of notes and messages from his friend at the Cleikum, ever following each other as thick as the papers which decorate the tail of a school-boy's kite, kept him so continually on the alert from daybreak till noon, that Mr. Touchwood found him completely dressed ; and the whiskey was only delayed for about ten minutes before the door of the manse, a space employed by Mr. Cargill in searching for his spectacles, which at last were happily discovered upon his own nose.

At length, seated by the side of his new friend, Mr. Cargill arrived safe at Shaws Castle, the gate of which mansion was surrounded by a screaming group of children, so extravagantly delighted at seeing the strange figures to whom each successive carriage gave birth, that even the stern brow and well-known voice of Johnnie Tirlsneck, the

beadle, though stationed in the court on express purpose, was not equal to the task of controlling them. These noisy intruders, however, who, it was believed, were somewhat favoured by Clara Mowbray, were excluded from the court which opened before the house, by a couple of grooms or helpers armed with their whips, and could only salute, with their shrill and wondering hailing, the various personages as they passed down a short avenue leading from the exterior gate.

The Cleikum nabob and the minister were greeted with shouts not the least clamorous ; which the former merited by the ease with which he wore the white turban, and the latter, by the infrequency of his appearance in public, and both, by the singular association of a decent clergyman of the Church of Scotland, in a dress more old-fashioned than could now be produced in the General Assembly, walking arm in arm, and seemingly in the most familiar terms, with a Parsee merchant. They stopped a moment at the gate of the courtyard to admire the front of the old mansion, which had been disturbed with so unusual a scene of gaiety.

Shaws Castle, though so named, presented no appearance of defence ; and the present edifice had never been designed for more than the accommodation of a peaceful family, having a low, heavy front, loaded with some of that meretricious ornament, which, uniting, or rather confounding, the Gothic and Grecian architecture, was much used during the reigns of James VI of Scotland, and his unfortunate son. The court formed a small square, two sides of which were occupied by such buildings as were required for the family, and the third by the stables, the only part to which much attention had been paid, the present Mr. Mowbray having put them into excellent order. The fourth side of the square was shut up by a screen wall, through which a door opened to the avenue ; the whole being a kind of structure which may be still found on those old Scottish properties, where a rage to render their place *Parkish*, as was at one time the prevailing phrase, has not induced the owners to pull down the venerable and sheltering appendages with which their wiser fathers had screened their mansion, and to lay the whole open to the

keen north-east ; much after the fashion of a spinster of fifty, who chills herself to gratify the public by an exposure of her thin red elbows, and shrivelled neck and bosom.

A double door, thrown hospitably open on the present occasion, admitted the company into a dark and low hall, where Mowbray himself, wearing the under dress of Theseus, but not having yet assumed his ducal cap and robes, stood to receive his guests with due courtesy, and to indicate to each the road allotted to him. Those who were to take a share in the representation of the morning, were conducted to an old saloon, destined for a green-room, and which communicated with a series of apartments on the right, hastily fitted with accommodations for arranging and completing their toilet ; while others, who took no part in the intended drama, were ushered to the left, into a large, unfurnished, and long disused dining parlour, where a sashed door opened into the gardens, crossed with yew and holly hedges, still trimmed and clipped by the old grey-headed gardener, upon those principles which a Dutchman thought worthy of commemorating in a didactic poem upon the *Ars Topiaria*.

A little wilderness, surrounding a beautiful piece of the smoothest turf, and itself bounded by such high hedges as we have described, had been selected as the stage most proper for the exhibition of the intended dramatic picture. It afforded many facilities ; for a rising bank exactly in front was accommodated with seats for the spectators, who had a complete view of the sylvan theatre, the bushes and shrubs having been cleared away, and the place supplied with a temporary screen, which, being withdrawn by the domestics appointed for that purpose, was to serve for the rising of the curtain. A covered trellis, which passed through another part of the garden, and terminated with a private door opening from the right wing of the building, seemed as if it had been planted on purpose for the proposed exhibition, as it served to give the personages of the drama a convenient and secret access from the green-room to the place of representation. Indeed, the dramatis personae, at least those who adopted the management of the matter, were induced, by so much convenience, to extend, in some measure, their original plan ; and, instead of one group, as

had been at first proposed, they now found themselves able to exhibit to the good company a succession of three or four, selected and arranged from different parts of the drama; thus giving some duration, as well as some variety, to the entertainment, besides the advantage of separating and contrasting the tragic and the comic scenes.

After wandering about amongst the gardens, which contained little to interest any one, and endeavouring to recognize some characters, who, accommodating themselves to the humours of the day, had ventured to appear in the various disguises of ballad-singers, pedlars, shepherds, Highlanders, and so forth, the company began to draw together towards the spot where the seats prepared for them, and the screen drawn in front of the bosky stage, induced them to assemble, and excited expectation, especially as a scroll in front of the esplanade set forth, in the words of the play, 'This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house, and we will do it in action.' A delay of about ten minutes began to excite some suppressed murmurs of impatience among the audience, when the touch of Gow's fiddle suddenly burst from a neighbouring hedge, behind which he had established his little orchestra. All were of course silent,

> As through his dear strathspeys he bore with Highland rage.

And when he changed his strain to an adagio, and suffered his music to die away in the plaintive notes of Roslin Castle, the echoes of the old walls were, after a long slumber, awakened by that enthusiastic burst of applause, with which the Scots usually received and rewarded their country's gifted minstrel.

'He is his father's own son,' said Touchwood to the clergyman, for both had gotten seats near about the centre of the place of audience. 'It is many a long year since I listened to old Niel at Inver, and, to say truth, spent a night with him over pancakes and Athole brose; and I never expected to hear his match again in my lifetime. But stop—the curtain rises.'

The screen was indeed withdrawn, and displayed Hermia, Helena, and their lovers, in attitudes corresponding to the scene of confusion occasioned by the error of Puck.

Messrs. Chatterly and the Painter played their parts neither better nor worse than amateur actors in general; and the best that could be said of them was, that they seemed more than half ashamed of their exotic dresses, and of the public gaze.

But against this untimely weakness Lady Penelope was guarded, by the strong shield of self-conceit. She minced, ambled, and, notwithstanding the slight appearance of her person, and the depredations which time had made on a countenance that had never been very much distinguished for beauty, seemed desirous to top the part of the beautiful daughter of Egeus. The sullenness which was proper to the character of Hermia, was much augmented by the discovery that Miss Mowbray was so much better dressed than herself,—a discovery which she had but recently made, as that young lady had not attended on the regular rehearsals at the Well, but once, and then without her stage habit. Her ladyship, however, did not permit this painful sense of inferiority, where she had expected triumph, so far to prevail over her desire of shining, as to interrupt materially the manner in which she had settled to represent her portion of the scene. The nature of the exhibition precluded much action, but Lady Penelope made amends by such a succession of grimaces, as might rival, in variety at least, the singular display which Garrick used to call 'going his rounds'. She twisted her poor features into looks of most desperate love towards Lysander; into those of wonder and offended pride, when she turned them upon Demetrius; and finally settled them on Helena, with the happiest possible imitation of an incensed rival, who feels the impossibility of relieving her swollen heart by tears alone, and is just about to have recourse to her nails.

No contrast could be stronger in looks, demeanour, and figure, than that between Hermia and Helena. In the latter character, the beautiful form and foreign dress of Miss Mowbray attracted all eyes. She kept her place on the stage, as a sentinel does that which his charge assigns him; for she had previously told her brother, that though she consented, at his importunity, to make part of the exhibition, it was as a piece of the scene, not as an actor, and accordingly a painted figure could scarce be more

immovable. The expression of her countenance seemed to be that of deep sorrow and perplexity, belonging to her part, over which wandered at times an air of irony or ridicule, as if she were secretly scorning the whole exhibition, and even herself for condescending to become part of it. Above all, a sense of bashfulness had cast upon her cheek a colour, which, though sufficiently slight, was more than her countenance was used to display; and when the spectators beheld, in the splendour and grace of a rich Oriental dress, her whom they had hitherto been accustomed to see attired only in the most careless manner, they felt the additional charms of surprise and contrast; so that the bursts of applause which were volleyed towards the stage, might be said to be addressed to her alone, and to vie in sincerity with those which have been forced from an audience by the most accomplished performer.

'Oh, that puir Lady Penelope!' said honest Mrs. Blower, who when her scruples against the exhibition were once got over, began to look upon it with particular interest; 'I am really sorry for her puir face, for she gars it work like the sails of John Blower's vesshel in a stiff breeze. Oh, Doctor Cacklehen, dinna ye think she wad need, if it were possible, to rin ower her face wi' a gusing iron, just to take the wrunkles out o't?'

'Hush, hush! my good dear Mrs. Blower,' said the doctor; 'Lady Penelope is a woman of quality, and my patient, and such people always act charmingly—you must understand there is no hissing at a private theatre—Hem!'

'Ye may say what ye like, doctor, but there is nae fule like an auld fule. To be sure, if she was as young and beautiful as Miss Mowbray—hegh me, and I didna use to think her sae bonny neither, but dress—dress makes an unco difference. That shawl o' hers—I daur say the like o't was ne'er seen in braid Scotland. It will be real Indian, I'se warrant.'

'Real Indian!' said Mr. Touchwood, in an accent of disdain, which rather disturbed Mrs. Blower's equanimity, 'why, what do you suppose it should be, madam?'

'I dinna ken, sir,' said she, edging somewhat nearer the doctor, not being altogether pleased, as she afterwards allowed, with the outlandish appearance and sharp tone of

the traveller; then pulling her own drapery round her shoulders, she added, courageously, 'There are braw shawls made at Paisley, that ye will scarce ken frae foreign.'

'Not know Paisley shawls from Indian, madam!' said Touchwood; 'why, a blind man could tell by the slightest touch of his little finger. Yon shawl, now, is the handsomest I have seen in Britain, and at this distance I can tell it to be a real *Tozie*.'

'Cozie may she weel be that wears it,' said Mrs. Blower. 'I declare, now I look on 't again, it 's a perfect beauty.'

'It is called Tozie, ma'am, not cozie,' continued the traveller; 'the Shroffs at Surat told me in 1801 that it is made out of the inner coat of a goat.'

'Of a sheep, sir, I am thinking ye mean, for goats has nae woo'.'

'Not much of it, indeed, madam; but you are to understand they use only the inmost coat; and then their dyes—that Tozie now will keep its colour while there is a rag of it left: men bequeath them in legacies to their grandchildren.'

'And a very bonny colour it is,' said the dame; 'something like a mouse's back, only a thought redder. I wonder what they ca' that colour.'

'The colour is much admired, madam,' said Touchwood, who was now on a favourite topic; 'the Mussulmans say the colour is betwixt that of an elephant and the breast of the *faughta*.'

'In troth, I am as wise as I was,' said Mrs. Blower.

'The *faughta*, madam, so called by the Moors (for the Hindus call it *hollah*), is a sort of pigeon, held sacred among the Moslem of India, because they think it dyed its breast in the blood of Ali. But I see they are closing the scene. Mr. Cargill, are you composing your sermon, my good friend, or what can you be thinking of?'

Mr. Cargill had, during the whole scene, remained with his eyes fixed, in intent and anxious, although almost unconscious, gaze, upon Clara Mowbray; and when the voice of his companion startled him out of his reverie, he exclaimed, 'Most lovely—most unhappy; yes, I must and will see her!'

'See her?' replied Touchwood, too much accustomed to his friend's singularities to look for much reason or

connexion in anything he said or did; 'Why, you shall see her and talk to her too, if that will give you pleasure. They say now,' he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, 'that this Mowbray is ruined. I see nothing like it, since he can dress out his sister like a begum. Did you ever see such a splendid shawl?'

'Dearly purchased splendour,' said Mr. Cargill, with a deep sigh; 'I wish that the price be yet fully paid!'

'Very likely not,' said the traveller; 'very likely it 's gone to the book; and for the price, I have known a thousand rupees given for such a shawl in the country. But hush, hush, we are to have another tune from Nathaniel; faith, and they are withdrawing the screen. Well, they have some mercy—they do not let us wait long between the acts of their follies at least. I love a quick and rattling fire in these vanities. Folly walking a funeral pace, and clinking her bells to the time of a passing knell, makes sad work indeed.'

A strain of music, beginning slowly, and terminating in a light and wild allegro, introduced on the stage those delightful creatures of the richest imagination that ever teemed with wonders, the Oberon and Titania of Shakespeare. The pigmy majesty of the captain of the fairy band had no unapt representative in Miss Digges, whose modesty was not so great an intruder as to prevent her desire to present him in all his dignity, and she moved, conscious of the graceful turn of a pretty ankle, which, encircled with a string of pearls, and clothed in flesh-coloured silk, of the most cobweb texture, rose above the crimson sandal. Her jewelled tiara, too, gave dignity to the frown with which the offended King of Shadows greeted his consort, as each entered upon the scene at the head of their several attendants.

The restlessness of the children had been duly considered; and, therefore, their part of the exhibition had been contrived to represent dumb show, rather than a stationary picture. The little Queen of Elves was not inferior in action to her moody lord, and repaid, with a look of female impatience and scorn, the haughty air which seemed to express his sullen greeting,

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

The other children were, as usual, some clever and forward, some loutish and awkward enough; but the gambols of childhood are sure to receive applause, paid, perhaps, with a mixture of pity and envy, by those in advanced life; and besides, there were in the company several fond papas and mammas, whose clamorous approbation, though given apparently to the whole performers, was especially dedicated in their hearts to their own little Jackies and Marias,—for *Mary*, though the prettiest and most classical of Scottish names, is now unknown in the land. The elves, therefore, played their frolics, danced a measure, and vanished with good approbation.

The anti-mask, as it may be called, of Bottom, and his company of actors, next appeared on the stage, and a thunder of applause received the young earl, who had, with infinite taste and dexterity, transformed himself into the similitude of an Athenian clown; observing the Grecian costume, yet so judiciously discriminated from the dress of the higher characters, as at once to fix the character of a thick-skinned mechanic on the wearer. Touchwood, in particular, was loud in his approbation, from which the correctness of the costume must be inferred; for that honest gentleman, like many other critics, was indeed not very much distinguished for good taste, but had a capital memory for petty matters of fact; and, while the most impressive look or gesture of an actor might have failed to interest him, would have censured most severely the fashion of a sleeve, or the colour of a shoe-tie.

But the Earl of Etherington's merits were not confined to his external appearance; for, had his better fortunes failed him, his deserts, like those of Hamlet, might have got him a fellowship in a cry of players. He presented, though in dumb show, the pragmatic conceit of Bottom, to the infinite amusement of all present, especially of those who were well acquainted with the original; and when he was 'translated' by Puck, he bore the ass's head, his newly acquired dignity, with an appearance of conscious greatness, which made the metamorphosis, though in itself sufficiently farcical, irresistibly comic. He afterwards displayed the same humour in his frolics with the fairies, and the intercourse which he held with Messrs. Cobweb, Mustard-seed,

Pease-blossom, and the rest of Titania's cavaliers, who lost all command of their countenances at the gravity with which he invited them to afford him the luxury of scratching his hairy snout. Mowbray had also found a fitting representative for Puck in a queer-looking, small-eyed boy, of the Aultoun of Saint Ronan's, with large ears projecting from his head like turrets from a Gothic building. This exotic animal personified the merry and mocking spirit of Hobgoblin with considerable power, so that the group bore some resemblance to the well-known and exquisite delineation of Puck by Sir Joshua, in the select collection of the Bard of Memory. It was, however, the ruin of the Saint Ronan's Robin Goodfellow, who did no good afterwards,—'gaid an ill gate,' as Meg Dods said, and 'took on' with a party of strolling players.

The entertainment closed with a grand parade of all the characters that had appeared, during which Mowbray concluded that the young lord himself, unremarked, might have time enough to examine the outward form, at least, of his sister Clara, whom, in the pride of his heart, he could not help considering superior in beauty, dressed as she now was, with every advantage of art, even to the brilliant Amazon, Lady Binks. It is true, Mowbray was not a man to give preference to the intellectual expression of poor Clara's features over the sultana-like beauty of the haughty dame, which promised to an admirer all the vicissitudes that can be expressed by a countenance lovely in every change, and changing as often as an ardent and impetuous disposition, unused to constraint and despising admonition, should please to dictate. Yet, to do him justice, though his preference was perhaps dictated more by fraternal partiality than by purity of taste, he certainly, on the present occasion, felt the full extent of Clara's superiority; and there was a proud smile on his lip, as, at the conclusion of the divertisement, he asked the earl how he had been pleased. The rest of the performers had separated, and the young lord remained on the stage, employed in disembarrassing himself of his awkward visor, when Mowbray put this question, to which, though general in terms, he naturally gave a particular meaning.

'I could wear my ass's head for ever,' he said, 'on condition my eyes were to be so delightfully employed as they have been during the last scene. Mowbray, your sister is an angel!'

'Have a care that that headpiece of yours has not perverted your taste, my lord,' said Mowbray. 'But why did you wear that disguise on your last appearance? You should, I think, have been uncovered.'

'I am ashamed to answer you,' said the earl; 'but truth is, first impressions are of consequence, and I thought I might do as wisely not to appear before your sister, for the first time, in the character of Bully Bottom.'

'Then you change your dress, my lord, for dinner, if we call our luncheon by that name?' said Mowbray.

'I am going to my room this instant for that very purpose,' replied the earl.

'And I,' said Mowbray, 'must step in front, and dismiss the audience; for I see they are sitting gaping there, waiting for another scene.'

They parted upon this; and Mowbray, as Duke Theseus, stepped before the screen, and announcing the conclusion of the dramatic pictures which they had had the honour to present before the worshipful company, thanked the spectators for the very favourable reception which they had afforded; and intimated to them, that if they could amuse themselves by strolling for an hour among the gardens, a bell would summon to the house at the expiry of that time, when some refreshments would wait their acceptance. This annunciation was received with the applause due to the *Amphitryon où l'on dine*; and the guests, arising from before the temporary theatre, dispersed through the gardens, which were of some extent, to seek for or create amusement to themselves. The music greatly aided them in this last purpose, and it was not long ere a dozen of couples and upwards were 'tripping it on the light fantastic toe' (I love a phrase that is not hackneyed), to the tune of Monymusk.

Others strolled through the grounds, meeting some quaint disguise at the end of every verdant alley, and communicating to others the surprise and amusement which they themselves were receiving. The scene, from the

variety of dresses, the freedom which it gave to the display of humour amongst such as possessed any, and the general disposition to give and receive pleasure, rendered the little masquerade more entertaining than others of the kind for which more ample and magnificent preparations have been made. There was also a singular and pleasing contrast between the fantastic figures who wandered through the gardens, and the quiet scene itself, to which the old clipt hedges, the formal distribution of the ground, and the antiquated appearance of one or two fountains and artificial cascades, in which the naiads had been for the nonce compelled to resume their ancient frolics, gave an appearance of unusual simplicity and seclusion, and which seemed rather to belong to the last than to the present generation.

CHAPTER XXI

PERPLEXITIES

> For revels, dances, masks, and merry hours,
> Fore-run fair Love, strewing his way with flowers.
> *Love's Labour's Lost.*
>
> Worthies, away—the scene begins to cloud.
> *Ibidem.*

Mr. Touchwood and his inseparable friend, Mr. Cargill, wandered on amidst the gay groups we have described, the former censuring with great scorn the frequent attempts which he observed towards an imitation of the costume of the East, and appealing with self-complacence to his own superior representation, as he greeted, in Moorish and in Persic, the several turbaned figures who passed his way; while the clergyman, whose mind seemed to labour with some weighty and important project, looked in every direction for the fair representative of Helena, but in vain. At length he caught a glimpse of the memorable shawl, which had drawn forth so learned a discussion from his companion; and starting from Touchwood's side with a degree of anxious alertness totally foreign to his usual

habits, he endeavoured to join the person by whom it was worn.

'By the Lord,' said his companion, 'the doctor is beside

In the Garden at Shaws Castle

himself!—the parson is mad!—the divine is out of his senses, that is clear; and how the devil can he, who scarce can find his road from the Cleikum to his own manse, venture himself unprotected into such a scene of confusion?

—he might as well pretend to cross the Atlantic without a pilot. I must push off in chase of him, lest worse come of it.'

But the traveller was prevented from executing his friendly purpose by a sort of crowd which came rushing down the alley, the centre of which was occupied by Captain MacTurk, in the very act of bullying two pseudo-Highlanders, for having presumed to lay aside their breeches before they had acquired the Gaelic language. The sounds of contempt and insult with which the genuine Celt was overwhelming the unfortunate impostors, were not, indeed, intelligible otherwise than from the tone and manner of the speaker; but these intimated so much displeasure, that the plaided forms whose unadvised choice of a disguise had provoked it—two raw lads from a certain great manufacturing town—heartily repented their temerity, and were in the act of seeking for the speediest exit from the gardens; rather choosing to resign their share of the dinner, than to abide the further consequences that might follow from the displeasure of this Highland Termagant.

Touchwood had scarcely extricated himself from this impediment, and again commenced his researches after the clergyman, when his course was once more interrupted by a sort of press-gang, headed by Sir Bingo Binks, who, in order to play his character of a drunken boatswain to the life, seemed certainly drunk enough, however little of a seaman. His cheer sounded more like a view-hallo than a hail, when, with a volley of such oaths as would have blown a whole fleet of the Bethel Union out of the water, he ordered Touchwood 'to come under his lee, and be d—d; for, smash his old timbers, he must go to sea again, for as weather-beaten a hulk as he was.'

Touchwood answered instantly, 'To sea with all my heart, but not with a land-lubber for commander. Harkye, brother, do you know how much of a horse's furniture belongs to a ship?'

'Come, none of your quizzing, my old buck,' said Sir Bingo. 'What the devil has a ship to do with horse's furniture? Do you think we belong to the horse-marines? ha! ha! I think you're matched, brother.'

'Why, you son of a fresh-water gudgeon,' replied the

traveller, 'that never in your life sailed farther than the Isle of Dogs, do you pretend to play a sailor, and not know the bridle of the bow-line, and the saddle of the boltsprit, and the bit for the cable, and the girth to hoist the rigging, and the whip to serve for small tackle? There is a trick for you to find out an Abramman, and save sixpence when he begs of you as a disbanded seaman. Get along with you! or the constable shall be charged with the whole press-gang to man the workhouse.'

A general laugh arose at the detection of the swaggering boatswain; and all that the baronet had for it was to sneak off saying, 'D—n the old quiz, who the devil thought to have heard so much slang from an old muslin nightcap?'

Touchwood, being now an object of some attention, was followed by two or three stragglers, whom he endeavoured to rid himself of the best way he could, testifying an impatience a little inconsistent with the decorum of his Oriental demeanour, but which arose from his desire to rejoin his companion, and some apprehension of inconvenience which he feared Cargill might sustain during his absence. For, being in fact as good-natured a man as any in the world, Mr. Touchwood was at the same time one of the most conceited, and was very apt to suppose that his presence, advice, and assistance, were of the most indispensable consequence to those with whom he lived; and that not only on great emergencies, but even in the most ordinary occurrences of life.

Meantime, Mr. Cargill, whom he sought in vain, was, on his part, anxiously keeping in sight of the beautiful Indian shawl, which served as a flag to announce to him the vessel which he held in chase. At length he approached so close as to say, in an anxious whisper, 'Miss Mowbray, Miss Mowbray, I must speak with you.'

'And what would you have with Miss Mowbray?' said the fair wearer of the beautiful shawl, but without turning round her head.

'I have a secret—an important secret, of which to make you aware; but it is not for this place. Do not turn from me! Your happiness in this, and perhaps in the next life, depends on your listening to me.'

The lady led the way, as if to give him an opportunity

of speaking with her more privately, to one of those old-fashioned and deeply-embowered recesses, which are commonly found in such gardens as that of Shaws Castle; and, with her shawl wrapped around her head, so as in some degree to conceal her features, she stood before Mr. Cargill in the doubtful light and shadow of a huge platanus tree, which formed the canopy of the arbour, and seemed to await the communication he had promised.

'Report says,' said the clergyman, speaking in an eager and hurried manner, yet with a low voice, and like one desirous of being heard by her whom he addressed, and by no one else, 'report says that you are about to be married.'

'And is report kind enough to say to whom?' answered the lady, with a tone of indifference which seemed to astound her interrogator.

'Young lady,' he answered, with a solemn voice, 'had this levity been sworn to me, I could never have believed it! Have you forgot the circumstances in which you stand? Have you forgotten that my promise of secrecy, sinful perhaps even in that degree, was but a conditional promise?—or did you think that a being so sequestered as I am was already dead to the world, even while he was walking upon its surface? Know, young lady, that I am indeed dead to the pleasures and the ordinary business of life, but I am even therefore the more alive to its duties.'

'Upon my honour, sir, unless you are pleased to be more explicit, it is impossible for me either to answer or understand you,' said the lady; 'you speak too seriously for a masquerade pleasantry, and yet not clearly enough to make your earnest comprehensible.'

'Is this sullenness, Miss Mowbray?' said the clergyman, with increased animation; 'Is it levity? Or is it alienation of mind? Even after a fever of the brain, we retain a recollection of the causes of our illness. Come, you must and do understand me, when I say that I will not consent to your committing a great crime to attain temporal wealth and rank, no, not to make you an empress. My path is a clear one; and should I hear a whisper breathed of your alliance with this earl, or whatever he may be, rely upon it, that I will withdraw the veil, and make your

brother, your bridegroom, and the whole world, acquainted with the situation in which you stand, and the impossibility of your forming the alliance which you propose to yourself, I am compelled to say, against the laws of God and man.'

'But, sir—sir,' answered the lady, rather eagerly than anxiously, 'you have not yet told me what business you have with my marriage, or what arguments you can bring against it.'

'Madam,' replied Mr. Cargill, 'in your present state of mind, and in such a scene as this, I cannot enter upon a topic for which the season is unfit, and you, I am sorry to say, are totally unprepared. It is enough that you know the grounds on which you stand. At a fitter opportunity, I will, as it is my duty, lay before you the enormity of what you are said to have meditated, with the freedom which becomes one, who, however humble, is appointed to explain to his fellow creatures the laws of his Maker. In the meantime, I am not afraid that you will take any hasty step, after such a warning as this.'

So saying, he turned from the lady with that dignity which a conscious discharge of duty confers, yet, at the same time, with a sense of deep pain, inflicted by the careless levity of her whom he addressed. She did not any longer attempt to detain him, but made her escape from the arbour by one alley, as she heard voices which seemed to approach it from another. The clergyman, who took the opposite direction, met in full encounter a whispering and tittering pair, who seemed, at his sudden appearance, to check their tone of familiarity, and assume an appearance of greater distance towards each other. The lady was no other than the fair Queen of the Amazons, who seemed to have adopted the recent partiality of Titania towards Bully Bottom, being in conference such and so close as we have described with the late representative of the Athenian weaver, whose recent visit to his chamber had metamorphosed into the more gallant disguise of an ancient Spanish cavalier. He now appeared with cloak and drooping plume, sword, poniard, and guitar, richly dressed at all points, as for a serenade beneath his mistress's window; a silk mask at the breast of his embroidered

doublet hung ready to be assumed in case of intrusion, as an appropriate part of the national dress.

It sometimes happened to Mr. Cargill, as we believe it may chance to other men much subject to absence of mind, that contrary to their wont, and much after the manner of a sunbeam suddenly piercing a deep mist, and illuminating one particular object in the landscape, some sudden recollection rushes upon them, and seems to compel them to act under it, as under the influence of complete certainty and conviction. Mr. Cargill had no sooner set eyes on the Spanish cavalier, in whom he neither knew the Earl of Etherington, nor recognized Bully Bottom, than with hasty motion he seized on his reluctant hand, and exclaimed, with a mixture of eagerness and solemnity, 'I rejoice to see you! Heaven has sent you here in its own good time.'

'I thank you, sir,' replied Lord Etherington, very coldly, 'I believe you have the joy of the meeting entirely on your side, as I cannot remember having seen you before.'

'Is not your name Bulmer?' said the clergyman. 'I—I know—I am sometimes apt to make mistakes. But I am sure your name is Bulmer?'

'Not that ever I or my godfathers heard of—my name was Bottom half an hour ago—perhaps that makes the confusion,' answered the earl, with very cold and distant politeness. 'Permit me to pass, sir, that I may attend the lady.'

'Quite unnecessary,' answered Lady Binks; 'I leave you to adjust your mutual recollections with your new old friend, my lord—he seems to have something to say.' So saying, the lady walked on, not perhaps sorry of an opportunity to show apparent indifference for his lordship's society, in the presence of one who had surprised them in what might seem a moment of exuberant intimacy.

'You detain me, sir,' said the Earl of Etherington to Mr. Cargill, who, bewildered and uncertain, still kept himself placed so directly before the young nobleman as to make it impossible for him to pass, without absolutely pushing him to one side. 'I must really attend the lady,' he added, making another effort to walk on.

'Young man,' said Mr. Cargill, 'you cannot disguise yourself from me. I am sure—my mind assures me, that

you are that very Bulmer whom Heaven hath sent here to prevent crime.'

'And you,' said Lord Etherington, 'whom my mind assures me I never saw in my life, are sent hither by the devil, I think, to create confusion.'

'I beg pardon, sir,' said the clergyman, staggered by the calm and pertinacious denial of the earl, 'I beg pardon if I am in a mistake—that is, if I am *really* in a mistake—but I am not—I am sure I am not. That look—that smile—I am NOT mistaken. You *are* Valentine Bulmer, the very Valentine Bulmer whom I—but I will not make your private affairs any part of this exposition—enough, you *are* Valentine Bulmer.'

'Valentine ?—Valentine ?' answered Lord Etherington impatiently; 'I am neither Valentine nor Orson. I wish you good morning, sir.'

'Stay, sir, stay, I charge you,' said the clergyman; 'if you are unwilling to be known yourself, it may be because you have forgotten who I am. Let me name myself as the Reverend Josiah Cargill, minister of Saint Ronan's.'

'If you bear a character so venerable, sir,' replied the young nobleman, 'in which, however, I am not in the least interested, I think when you make your morning draught a little too potent, it might be as well for you to stay at home and sleep it off, before coming into company.'

'In the name of Heaven, young gentleman,' said Mr. Cargill, 'lay aside this untimely and unseemly jesting! and tell me if you be not—as I cannot but still believe you to be—that same youth, who, seven years since, left in my deposit a solemn secret, which, if I should unfold to the wrong person, woe would be my own heart, and evil the consequences which might ensue!'

'You are very pressing with me, sir,' said the earl; 'and, in exchange, I will be equally frank with you. I am not the man whom you mistake me for, and you may go seek him where you will. It will be still more lucky for you if you chance to find your own wits in the course of your researches; for I must tell you plainly, I think they are gone somewhat astray.' So saying, with a gesture expressive of a determined purpose to pass on, Mr. Cargill had no alternative but to make way, and suffer him to proceed.

The worthy clergyman stood as if rooted to the ground, and, with his usual habit of thinking aloud, exclaimed to himself, 'My fancy has played me many a bewildering trick, but this is the most extraordinary of them all! What can this young man think of me? It must have been my conversation with that unhappy young lady that has made such an impression upon me as to deceive my very eyesight, and causes me to connect with her history the face of the next person that I met. What *must* the stranger think of me?'

'Why, what every one thinks of thee that knows thee, prophet,' said the friendly voice of Touchwood, accompanying his speech with an awakening slap on the clergyman's shoulder; 'and that is, that thou art an unfortunate philosopher of Laputa, who has lost his flapper in the throng. Come along—having me once more by your side, you need fear nothing. Why, now I look at you closer, you look as if you had seen a basilisk—not that there is any such thing, otherwise I must have seen it myself, in the course of my travels—but you seem pale and frightened. What the devil is the matter?'

'Nothing,' answered the clergyman, 'except that I have even this very moment made an egregious fool of myself.'

'Pooh, pooh, that is nothing to sigh over, prophet. Every man does so at least twice in the four-and-twenty hours,' said Touchwood.

'But I had nearly betrayed to a stranger a secret deeply concerning the honour of an ancient family.'

'That was wrong, doctor,' said Touchwood; 'take care of that in future; and, indeed, I would advise you not to speak even to your beadle, Johnnie Tirlsneck, until you have assured yourself, by at least three pertinent questions and answers, that you have the said Johnnie corporeally and substantially in presence before you, and that your fancy has not invested some stranger with honest Johnnie's singed periwig and threadbare brown joseph—Come along—come along.'

So saying, he hurried forward the perplexed clergyman, who in vain made all the excuses he could think of in order to effect his escape from the scene of gaiety, in which he was so unexpectedly involved. He pleaded headache; and his friend assured him that a mouthful of food, and

a glass of wine, would mend it. He stated he had business; and Touchwood replied that he could have none but composing his next sermon, and reminded him that it was two days till Sunday. At length, Mr. Cargill confessed that he had some reluctance again to see the stranger, on whom he had endeavoured with such pertinacity to fix an acquaintance, which he was now well assured existed only in his own imagination. The traveller treated his scruples with scorn, and said, that guests meeting in this general manner, had no more to do with each other than if they were assembled in a caravansarai.

'So that you need not say a word to him in the way of apology or otherwise—or, what will be still better, I, who have seen so much of the world, will make the pretty speech for you.' As they spoke, he dragged the divine towards the house, where they were now summoned by the appointed signal, and where the company were assembling in the old saloon already noticed, previous to passing into the dining-room, where the refreshments were prepared. 'Now, doctor,' continued the busy friend of Mr. Cargill, 'let us see which of all these people has been the subject of your blunder. Is it yon animal of a Highlandman? or the impertinent brute that wants to be thought a boatswain? or which of them all is it? Aye, here they come, two and two, Newgate fashion: the young Lord of the Manor with old Lady Penelope—does he set up for Ulysses, I wonder? The Earl of Etherington with Lady Bingo—methinks it should have been with Miss Mowbray.'

'The earl of what, did you say?' quoth the clergyman anxiously. 'How is it you titled that young man in the Spanish dress?'

'Oho!' said the traveller; 'what, I have discovered the goblin that has scared you? Come along—come along—I will make you acquainted with him.' So saying, he dragged him towards Lord Etherington; and before the divine could make his negative intelligible, the ceremony of introduction had taken place—'My Lord Etherington, allow me to present Mr. Cargill, minister of this parish—a learned gentleman, whose head is often in the Holy Land, when his person seems present among his friends. He suffers extremely, my lord, under the sense of mistaking

your lordship for the Lord knows who; but when you are acquainted with him, you will find that he can make a hundred stranger mistakes than that, so we hope that your lordship will take no prejudice or offence.'

'There can be no offence taken where no offence is intended,' said Lord Etherington, with much urbanity. 'It is I who ought to beg the reverend gentleman's pardon for hurrying from him without allowing him to make a complete *éclaircissement*. I beg his pardon for an abruptness which the place and the time—for I was immediately engaged in a lady's service—rendered unavoidable.'

Mr. Cargill gazed on the young nobleman, as he pronounced these words with the easy indifference of one who apologizes to an inferior in order to maintain his own character for politeness, but with perfect indifference whether his excuses are or are not held satisfactory. And as the clergyman gazed, the belief which had so strongly clung to him that the Earl of Etherington and young Valentine Bulmer were the same individual person, melted away like frost-work before the morning sun, and that so completely, that he marvelled at himself for having ever entertained it. Some strong resemblance of features there must have been to have led him into such a delusion, but the person, the tone, the manner of expression, were absolutely different; and his attention being now especially directed towards these particulars, Mr. Cargill was inclined to think the two personages almost totally dissimilar.

The clergyman had now only to make his apology, and fall back from the head of the table to some lower seat which his modesty would have preferred, when he was suddenly seized upon by the Lady Penelope Penfeather, who, detaining him in the most elegant and persuasive manner possible, insisted that they should be introduced to each other by Mr. Mowbray, and that Mr. Cargill should sit beside her at table. She had heard so much of his learning—so much of his excellent character—desired so much to make his acquaintance, that she could not think of losing an opportunity, which Mr. Cargill's learned seclusion rendered so very rare—in a word, catching the Black Lion was the order of the day; and her ladyship, having trapped her prey, soon sat triumphant with him by her side.

A second separation was thus effected betwixt Touchwood and his friend; for the former, not being included in the invitation, or, indeed, at all noticed by Lady Penelope, was obliged to find room at a lower part of the table, where he excited much surprise by the dexterity with which he dispatched boiled rice with chop-sticks.

Mr. Cargill being thus exposed, without a consort, to the fire of Lady Penelope, speedily found it so brisk and incessant, as to drive his complaisance, little tried as it had been for many years by small talk, almost to extremity. She began by begging him to draw his chair close, for an instinctive terror of fine ladies had made him keep his distance. At the same time, she hoped 'he was not afraid of her as an Episcopalian; her father had belonged to that communion; for,' she added, with what was intended for an arch smile, 'we were somewhat naughty in the forty-five, as you may have heard; but all that was over, and she was sure Mr. Cargill was too liberal to entertain any dislike or shyness on that score. She could assure him she was far from disliking the Presbyterian form—indeed she had often wished to hear it, where she was sure to be both delighted and edified' (here a gracious smile) 'in the church of Saint Ronan's—and hoped to do so whenever Mr. Mowbray had got a stove, which he had ordered from Edinburgh, on purpose to air his pew for her accommodation.'

All this, which was spoken with wreathed smiles and nods, and so much civility as to remind the clergyman of a cup of tea over sweetened to conceal its want of strength and flavour, required and received no further answer than an accommodating look and acquiescent bow.

'Ah, Mr. Cargill,' continued the inexhaustible Lady Penelope, 'your profession has so many demands on the heart as well as the understanding—is so much connected with the kindnesses and charities of our nature—with our best and purest feelings, Mr. Cargill! You know what Goldsmith says:—

> 'in his duty prompt at every call,
> He watched, and wept, and felt, and prayed for all.

And then Dryden has such a picture of a parish priest, so

inimitable, one would think, did we not hear now and then of some living mortal presuming to emulate its features' (here another insinuating nod and expressive smile).

> 'Refined himself to soul to curb the sense,
> And almost made a sin of abstinence.
> Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
> But such a face as promised him sincere;
> Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,
> But sweet regard and pleasing sanctity.'

While her ladyship declaimed, the clergyman's wandering eye confessed his absent mind; his thoughts travelling, perhaps, to accomplish a truce betwixt Saladin and Conrade of Montserrat, unless they chanced to be occupied with some occurrences of that very day, so that the lady was obliged to recall her indocile auditor with the leading question, 'You are well acquainted with Dryden, of course, Mr. Cargill?'

'I have not the honour, madam,' said Mr. Cargill, starting from his reverie, and but half understanding the question he replied to.

'Sir!' said the lady, in surprise.

'Madam!—my lady!' answered Mr. Cargill, in embarrassment.

'I asked you if you admired Dryden; but you learned men are so absent—perhaps you thought I said Leyden.'

'A lamp too early quenched, madam,' said Mr. Cargill; 'I knew him well.'

'And so did I,' eagerly replied the lady of the cerulean buskin; 'he spoke ten languages—how mortifying to poor me, Mr. Cargill, who could only boast of five!—but I have studied a little since that time. I must have you to help me in my studies, Mr. Cargill—it will be charitable—but perhaps you are afraid of a female pupil?'

A thrill, arising from former recollections, passed through poor Cargill's mind with as much acuteness as the pass of a rapier might have done through his body; and we cannot help remarking, that a forward prater in society, like a busy bustler in a crowd, besides all other general points of annoyance, is eternally rubbing upon some tender point, and galling men's feelings, without knowing or regarding it.

'You must assist me, besides, in my little charities,

Mr. Cargill, now that you and I are become so well acquainted. There is that Ann Heggie—I sent her a trifle yesterday, but I am told—I should not mention it, but only one would not have the little they have to bestow lavished on an improper object—I am told she is not quite proper —an unwedded mother in short, Mr. Cargill—and it would be especially unbecoming in me to encourage profligacy.'

'I believe, madam,' said the clergyman gravely, 'the poor woman's distress may justify your ladyship's bounty, even if her conduct has been faulty.'

'Oh, I am no prude, neither, I assure you, Mr. Cargill,' answered the Lady Penelope. 'I never withdraw my countenance from any one but on the most irrefragable grounds. I could tell you of an intimate friend of my own, whom I have supported against the whole clamour of the people at the Well, because I believe, from the bottom of my soul, she is only thoughtless—nothing in the world but thoughtless—O Mr. Cargill, how can you look across the table so intelligently ?—who would have thought it of you ? —Oh fie, to make such personal applications ! '

'Upon my word, madam, I am quite at a loss to comprehend '——

'Oh fie, fie, Mr. Cargill,' throwing in as much censure and surprise as a confidential whisper can convey—' you looked at my Lady Binks—I know what you think, but you are quite wrong, I assure you ; you are entirely wrong. I wish she would not flirt quite so much with that young Lord Etherington though, Mr. Cargill—her situation is particular. Indeed, I believe she wears out his patience ; for see he is leaving the room before we sit down—how singular !—And then, do you not think it very odd, too, that Miss Mowbray has not come down to us ? '

'Miss Mowbray !—what of Miss Mowbray—is she not here ? ' said Mr. Cargill, starting, and with an expression of interest which he had not yet bestowed on any of her ladyship's liberal communications.

'Aye, poor Miss Mowbray,' said Lady Penelope, lowering her voice, and shaking her head ; ' she has not appeared— her brother went upstairs a few minutes since, I believe, to bring her down, and so we are all left here to look at each other. How very awkward !—But you know Clara Mowbray.'

'I, madam?' said Mr. Cargill, who was now sufficiently attentive; 'I really—I know Miss Mowbray—that is, I knew her some years since—but your ladyship knows she has been long in bad health—uncertain health at least, and I have seen nothing of the young lady for a very long time.'

'I know it, my dear Mr. Cargill—I know it,' continued the Lady Penelope, in the same tone of deep sympathy, 'I know it; and most unhappy surely have been the circumstances that have separated her from your advice and friendly counsel. All this I am aware of—and to say truth, it has been chiefly on poor Clara's account that I have been giving you the trouble of fixing an acquaintance upon you. You and I together, Mr. Cargill, might do wonders to cure her unhappy state of mind—I am sure we might—that is, if you could bring your mind to repose absolute confidence in me.'

'Has Miss Mowbray desired your ladyship to converse with me upon any subject which interests her?' said the clergyman, with more cautious shrewdness than Lady Penelope had suspected him of possessing. 'I will in that case be happy to hear the nature of her communication; and whatever my poor services can perform, your ladyship may command them.'

'I—I—I cannot just assert,' said her ladyship with hesitation, 'that I have Miss Mowbray's direct instructions to speak to you, Mr. Cargill, upon the present subject. But my affection for the dear girl is so very great—and then, you know, the inconveniences which may arise from this match.'

'From which match, Lady Penelope?' said Mr. Cargill.

'Nay, now, Mr. Cargill, you really carry the privilege of Scotland too far—I have not put a single question to you, but what you have answered by another—let us converse intelligibly for five minutes, if you can but condescend so far.'

'For any length of time which your ladyship may please to command,' said Mr. Cargill, 'provided the subject regard your ladyship's own affairs or mine,—could I suppose these last for a moment likely to interest you.'

'Out upon you,' said the lady, laughing affectedly; 'you

should really have been a Catholic priest instead of a Presbyterian. What an invaluable father confessor have the fair sex lost in you, Mr. Cargill, and how dexterously you would have evaded any cross-examinations which might have committed your penitents ! '

' Your ladyship's raillery is far too severe for me to withstand or reply to,' said Mr. Cargill, bowing with more ease than her ladyship expected ; and, retiring gently backward, he extricated himself from a conversation which he began to find somewhat embarrassing.

At that moment a murmur of surprise took place in the apartment, which was just entered by Miss Mowbray, leaning on her brother's arm. The cause of this murmur will be best understood, by narrating what had passed betwixt the brother and sister.

CHAPTER XXII

EXPOSTULATION

Seek not the feast in these irreverent robes ;
Go to my chamber—put on clothes of mine.
The Taming of the Shrew.

It was with a mixture of anxiety, vexation, and resentment, that Mowbray, just when he had handed Lady Penelope into the apartment, where the tables were covered, observed that his sister was absent, and that Lady Binks was hanging on the arm of Lord Etherington, to whose rank it would properly have fallen to escort the lady of the house. An anxious and hasty glance cast through the room ascertained that she was absent, nor could the ladies present give any account of her after she had quitted the gardens, except that Lady Penelope had spoken a few words with her in her own apartment, immediately after the scenic entertainment was concluded.

Thither Mowbray hurried, complaining aloud of his sister's laziness in dressing, but internally hoping that the delay was occasioned by nothing of a more important character.

He hastened upstairs, entered her sitting-room without ceremony, and knocking at the door of her dressing-room, begged her to make haste.

'Here is the whole company impatient,' he said, assuming a tone of pleasantry; 'and Sir Bingo Binks exclaiming for your presence, that he may be let loose on the cold meat.'

'Paddock calls,' said Clara from within; 'anon—anon!'

'Nay, it is no jest, Clara,' continued her brother; 'for Lady Penelope is miauling like a starved cat!'

'I come—I come, graymalkin,' answered Clara, in the same vein as before, and entered the parlour as she spoke, her finery entirely thrown aside, and dressed in the riding-habit which was her usual and favourite attire.

Her brother was both surprised and offended. 'On my soul,' he said, 'Clara, this is behaving very ill. I indulge you in every freak upon ordinary occasions, but you might surely on this day, of all others, have condescended to appear something like my sister, and a gentlewoman receiving company in her own house.'

'Why, dearest John,' said Clara, 'so that the guests have enough to eat and drink, I cannot conceive why I should concern myself about their finery, or they trouble themselves about my plain clothes.'

'Come, come, Clara, this will not do,' answered Mowbray; 'you must positively go back into your dressing-room, and huddle your things on as fast as you can. You cannot go down to the company dressed as you are.'

'I certainly can, and I certainly will, John—I have made a fool of myself once this morning to oblige you, and for the rest of the day I am determined to appear in my own dress; that is, in one which shows I neither belong to the world, nor wish to have anything to do with its fashions.'

'By my soul, Clara, I will make you repent this!' said Mowbray, with more violence than he usually exhibited where his sister was concerned.

'You cannot, dear John,' she coolly replied, 'unless by beating me; and that I think you would repent of yourself.'

'I do not know but what it were the best way of managing you,' said Mowbray, muttering between his teeth; but, commanding his violence, he only said aloud, 'I am sure,

from long experience, Clara, that your obstinacy will at the long run beat my anger. Do let us compound the point for once—keep your old habit, since you are so fond of making a sight of yourself, and only throw the shawl round your shoulders—it has been exceedingly admired, and every woman in the house longs to see it closer—they can hardly believe it genuine.'

'Do be a man, Mowbray,' answered his sister; 'meddle with your horse-sheets, and leave shawls alone.'

'Do you be a woman, Clara, and think a little on them, when custom and decency render it necessary. Nay, is it possible!—Will you not stir—not oblige me in such a trifle as this?'

'I would indeed if I could,' said Clara; 'but since you must know the truth—do not be angry—I have not the shawl. I have given it away—given it up, perhaps I should say, to the rightful owner. She has promised me something or other in exchange for it, however. I have given it to Lady Penelope.'

'Yes,' answered Mowbray, 'some of the work of her own fair hands, I suppose, or a couple of her ladyship's drawings, made up into fire-screens. On my word—on my soul, this is too bad! It is using me too ill, Clara—far too ill. If the thing had been of no value, my giving it to you should have fixed some upon it. Good-even to you; we will do as well as we can without you.'

'Nay, but, my dear John—stay but a moment,' said Clara, taking his arm as he sullenly turned towards the door; 'there are but two of us on earth—do not let us quarrel about a trumpery shawl.'

'Trumpery!' said Mowbray; 'It cost fifty guineas, by G—, which I can but ill spare—trumpery!'

'Oh, never think of the cost,' said Clara; 'it was your gift, and that should, I own, have been enough to have made me keep to my death's day the poorest rag of it. But really Lady Penelope looked so very miserable, and twisted her poor face into so many odd expressions of anger and chagrin, that I resigned it to her, and agreed to say she had lent it to me for the performance. I believe she was afraid that I would change my mind, or that you would resume it as a seignorial waif; for, after she had walked

a few turns with it wrapped around her, merely by way of taking possession, she dispatched it by a special messenger to her apartment at the Well.'

'She may go to the devil,' said Mowbray, 'for a greedy unconscionable jade, who has varnished over a selfish, spiteful heart, that is as hard as a flint, with a fine glossing of taste and sensibility.'

'Nay, but, John,' replied his sister, 'she really had something to complain of in the present case. The shawl had been bespoken on her account, or very nearly so—she showed me the tradesman's letter—only some agent of yours had come in between with the ready money, which no tradesman can resist. Ah, John! I suspect half of your anger is owing to the failure of a plan to mortify poor Lady Pen, and that she has more to complain of than you have. Come, come, you have had the advantage of her in the first display of this fatal piece of finery, if wearing it on my poor shoulders can be called a display—e'en make her welcome to the rest for peace's sake, and let us go down to these good folks, and you shall see how pretty and civil I shall behave.'

Mowbray, a spoiled child, and with all the petted habits of indulgence, was exceedingly fretted at the issue of the scheme which he had formed for mortifying Lady Penelope; but he saw at once the necessity of saying nothing more to his sister on the subject. Vengeance he privately muttered against Lady Pen, whom he termed an absolute harpy in blue-stockings; unjustly forgetting, that, in the very important affair at issue, he himself had been the first to interfere with and defeat her ladyship's designs on the garment in question.

'But I will blow her,' he said, 'I will blow her ladyship's conduct in the business! She shall not outwit a poor whimsical girl like Clara without hearing it on more sides than one.'

With this Christian and gentlemanlike feeling towards Lady Penelope, he escorted his sister into the eating-room, and led her to her proper place at the head of the table. It was the negligence displayed in her dress, which occasioned the murmur of surprise that greeted Clara on her entrance. Mowbray, as he placed his sister in her chair,

made her general apology for her late appearance, and her riding-habit. 'Some fairies,' he supposed, 'Puck, or such-like tricksy goblin, had been in her wardrobe, and carried off whatever was fit for wearing.'

There were answers from every quarter—that it would have been too much to expect Miss Mowbray to dress for their amusement a second time—that nothing she chose to wear could misbecome Miss Mowbray—that she had set like the sun, in her splendid scenic dress, and now rose like the full moon in her ordinary attire (this flight was by the Reverend Mr. Chatterly),—and that 'Miss Mowbray being at hame, had an unco gude right to please hersell'; which last piece of politeness, being at least as much to the purpose as any that had preceded it, was the contribution of honest Mrs. Blower, and was replied to by Miss Mowbray with a particular and most gracious bow.

Mrs. Blower ought to have rested her colloquial fame, as Dr. Johnson would have said, upon a compliment so evidently acceptable, but no one knows where to stop. She thrust her broad, good-natured, delighted countenance forward, and sending her voice from the bottom to the top of the table, like her umquhile husband when calling to his mate during a breeze, wondered 'why Miss Clara Mowbrie didna wear that grand shawl she had on at the play-making, and her just sitting upon the wind of a door. Nae doubt it was for fear of the soup, and the butter-boats and the like; —but *she* had three shawls, which she really fand was ane ower mony—if Miss Mowbrie wad like to wear ane o' them—it was but imitashion to be sure—but it wad keep her shouthers as warm as if it were real Indian, and if it were dirtied it was the less matter.'

'Much obliged, Mrs. Blower,' said Mowbray, unable to resist the temptation which this speech offered; 'but my sister is not yet of quality sufficient to entitle her to rob her friends of their shawls.'

Lady Penelope coloured to the eyes, and bitter was the retort that arose to her tongue; but she suppressed it, and nodding to Miss Mowbray in the most friendly way in the world, yet with a very particular expression, she only said, 'So you have told your brother of the little transaction which we have had this morning?—*Tu me lo pagherai*—

I give you fair warning, take care none of your secrets come into my keeping—that 's all.'

Upon what mere trifles do the important events of human life sometimes depend ! If Lady Penelope had given way to her first movements of resentment, the probable issue would have been some such half-comic, half-serious skirmish, as her ladyship and Mr. Mowbray had often amused the company withal. But revenge which is suppressed and deferred, is always most to be dreaded ; and to the effects of the deliberate resentment which Lady Penelope cherished upon this trifling occasion, must be traced the events which our history has to record. Secretly did she determine to return the shawl, which she had entertained hopes of making her own upon very reasonable terms ; and as secretly did she resolve to be revenged both upon brother and sister, conceiving herself already possessed, to a certain degree, of a clue to some part of their family history, which might serve for a foundation on which to raise her projected battery. The ancient offences and emulation of importance of the laird of St. Ronan's, and the superiority which had been given to Clara in the exhibition of the day, combined with the immediate cause of resentment ; and it only remained for her to consider how her revenge could be most signally accomplished.

Whilst such thoughts were passing through Lady Penelope's mind, Mowbray was searching with his eyes for the Earl of Etherington, judging that it might be proper, in the course of the entertainment, or before the guests had separated, to make him formally acquainted with his sister, as a preface to the more intimate connexion which must, in prosecution of the plan agreed upon, take place betwixt them. Greatly to his surprise, the young earl was nowhere visible, and the place which he had occupied by the side of Lady Binks had been quietly appropriated by Winterblossom, as the best and softest chair in the room, and nearest to the head of the table, where the choicest of the entertainment is usually arranged. This honest gentleman, after a few insipid compliments to her ladyship upon her performance as Queen of the Amazons, had betaken himself to the much more interesting occupation of ogling the dishes, through the glass which hung suspended at his

neck by a gold chain of Maltese workmanship. After looking and wondering for a few seconds, Mowbray addressed himself to the old *beau-garçon*, and asked him what had become of Etherington.

'Retreated,' said Winterblossom, 'and left but his compliments to you behind him—a complaint, I think, in his wounded arm. Upon my word, that soup has a most appetizing flavour!—Lady Penelope, shall I have the honour to help you?—no!—nor you, Lady Binks?—you are too cruel!—I must comfort myself, like a heathen priest of old, by eating the sacrifice which the deities have scorned to accept of.'

Here he helped himself to the plate of soup which he had in vain offered to the ladies, and transferred the further duty of dispensing it to Master Chatterly; 'it is your profession, sir, to propitiate the divinities—ahem!'

'I did not think Lord Etherington would have left us so soon,' said Mowbray; 'but we must do the best we can without his countenance.'

So saying, he assumed his place at the bottom of the table, and did his best to support the character of a hospitable and joyous landlord, while on her part, with much natural grace, and delicacy of attention calculated to set everybody at their ease, his sister presided at the upper end of the board. But the vanishing of Lord Etherington in a manner so sudden and unaccountable—the obvious ill-humour of Lady Penelope—and the steady, though passive, sullenness of Lady Binks, spread among the company a gloom like that produced by an autumnal mist upon a pleasing landscape. The women were low-spirited, dull, nay, peevish, they did not well know why; and the men could not be joyous, though the ready resource of old hock and champagne made some of them talkative. Lady Penelope broke up the party by well-feigned apprehension of the difficulties, nay, dangers of returning by so rough a road. Lady Binks begged a seat with her ladyship, as Sir Bingo, she said, judging from his devotion to the green flask, was likely to need their carriage home. From the moment of their departure, it became bad *ton* to remain behind; and all, as in a retreating army, were eager to be foremost, excepting MacTurk and a few stanch topers, who, unused

to meet with such good cheer every day of their lives, prudently determined to make the most of the opportunity.

We will not dwell on the difficulties attending the transportation of a large company by a few carriages, though the delay and disputes thereby occasioned were of course more intolerable than in the morning, for the parties had no longer the hopes of a happy day before them as a bribe to submit to temporary inconvenience. The impatience of many was so great that, though the evening was raw, they chose to go on foot rather than await the dull routine of the returning carriages; and as they retired, they agreed, with one consent, to throw the blame of whatever inconvenience they might sustain on their host and hostess, who had invited so large a party before getting a shorter and better road made between the Well and Shaws Castle.

'It would have been so easy to repair the path by the Buck-stane!'

And this was all the thanks which Mr. Mowbray received for an entertainment which had cost him so much trouble and expense, and had been looked forward to by the good society at the Well with such impatient expectation.

'It was an unco pleasant show,' said the good-natured Mrs. Blower, 'only it was a pity it was sae tediousome; and there was surely an awfu' waste of gauze and muslin.'

But so well had Dr. Quackleben improved his numerous opportunities, that the good lady was much reconciled to affairs in general, by the prospect of coughs, rheumatisms, and other maladies acquired upon the occasion, which were likely to afford that learned gentleman, in whose prosperity she much interested herself, a very profitable harvest.

Mowbray, somewhat addicted to the service of Bacchus, did not find himself freed, by the secession of so large a proportion of the company, from the service of the jolly god, although, upon the present occasion, he could well have dispensed with his orgies. Neither the song, nor the pun, nor the jest, had any power to kindle his heavy spirit, mortified as he was by the event of his party being so different from the brilliant consummation which he had anticipated. The guests, stanch boon companions, suffered not, however, their party to flag for want of the land-

lord's participation, but continued to drink bottle after bottle, with as little regard for Mr. Mowbray's grave looks, as if they had been carousing at the Mowbray Arms, instead of the Mowbray mansion-house. Midnight at length released him, when, with an unsteady step, he sought his own apartment, cursing himself and his companions, consigning his own person with all dispatch to his bed, and bequeathing those of the company to as many mosses and quagmires as could be found betwixt Shaws Castle and Saint Ronan's Well.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PROPOSAL

Oh! you would be a vestal maid, I warrant,
The bride of heaven—Come—we may shake your purpose;
For here I bring in hand a jolly suitor
Hath ta'en degrees in the seven sciences
That ladies love best—he is young and noble,
Handsome and valiant, gay, and rich, and liberal.
The Nun.

THE morning after a debauch is usually one of reflection, even to the most customary boon-companion; and, in the retrospect of the preceding day, the young laird of St. Ronan's saw nothing very consolatory, unless that the excess was not, in the present case, of his own seeking, but had arisen out of the necessary duties of a landlord, or what were considered as such by his companions.

But it was not so much his dizzy recollections of the late carouse which haunted him on awakening, as the inexplicability which seemed to shroud the purposes and conduct of his new ally the Earl of Etherington.

That young nobleman had seen Miss Mowbray, had declared his high satisfaction, had warmly and voluntarily renewed the proposal which he had made ere she was yet known to him—and yet, far from seeking an opportunity to be introduced to her, he had even left the party abruptly, in order to avoid the necessary intercourse which must there have taken place between them. His lordship's flirtation with Lady Binks had not escaped the attention

of the sagacious Mowbray—her ladyship also had been in a hurry to leave Shaws Castle ; and Mowbray promised to himself to discover the nature of this connexion through Mrs. Gingham, her ladyship's attendant, or otherwise ; vowing deeply at the same time, that no peer in the realm should make an affectation of addressing Miss Mowbray a cloak for another and more secret intrigue. But his doubts on this subject were in great measure removed by the arrival of one of Lord Etherington's grooms with the following letter :—

'My dear Mowbray,

'You would naturally be surprised at my escape from the table yesterday before you returned to it, or your lovely sister had graced it with her presence. I must confess my folly ; and I may do so the more boldly, for, as the footing on which I first opened this treaty was not a very romantic one, you will scarce suspect me of wishing to render it such. But I did in reality feel, during the whole of yesterday, a reluctance which I cannot express, to be presented to the lady on whose favour the happiness of my future life is to depend, upon such a public occasion, and in the presence of so promiscuous a company. I had my mask, indeed, to wear while in the promenade, but, of course, that was to be laid aside at table, and, consequently, I must have gone through the ceremony of introduction ; a most interesting moment, which I was desirous to defer till a fitter season. I trust you will permit me to call upon you at Shaws Castle this morning, in the hope—the anxious hope—of being allowed to pay my duty to Miss Mowbray, and apologize for not waiting upon her yesterday. I expect your answer with the utmost impatience, being always yours, &c., &c., &c. Etherington.'

'This,' said St. Ronan's to himself, as he folded up the letter deliberately, after having twice read it over, 'seems all fair and above-board ; I could not wish anything more explicit ; and, moreover, it puts into black and white, as old Mick would say, what only rested before on our private conversation. An especial cure for the headache, such a billet as this in a morning.'

So saying, he sat him down and wrote an answer, express-

ing the pleasure he should have in seeing his lordship as soon as he thought proper. He watched even the departure of the groom, and beheld him gallop off with the speed of one who knows that his quick return was expected by an impatient master.

Mowbray remained for a few minutes by himself, and reflected with delight upon the probable consequences of this match ;—the advancement of his sister—and, above all, the various advantages which must necessarily accrue to himself, by so close an alliance with one whom he had good reason to think deep *in the secret*, and capable of rendering him the most material assistance in his speculations on the turf, and in the sporting world. He then sent a servant to let Miss Mowbray know that he intended to breakfast with her.

'I suppose, John,' said Clara, as her brother entered the apartment, 'you are glad of a weaker cup this morning than those you were drinking last night—you were carousing till after the first cock.'

'Yes,' said Mowbray, 'that sandbed, old MacTurk, upon whom whole hogsheads make no impression, did make a bad boy of me—but the day is over, and they will scarce catch me in such another scrape. What did you think of the masks ?'

'Supported as well,' said Clara, 'as such folk support the disguise of gentlemen and ladies during life ; and that is, with a great deal of bustle, and very little propriety.'

'I saw only one good mask there, and that was a Spaniard,' said her brother.

'Oh, I saw him too,' answered Clara ; 'but he wore his vizor on. An old Indian merchant, or some such thing, seemed to me a better character—the Spaniard did nothing but stalk about and twangle his guitar, for the amusement of my Lady Binks, as I think.'

'He is a very clever fellow, though, that same Spaniard,' rejoined Mowbray—'Can you guess who he is ?'

'No, indeed ; nor shall I take the trouble of trying. To set to guessing about it, were as bad as seeing the whole mummery over again.'

'Well,' replied her brother, 'you will allow one thing at least—Bottom was well acted—you cannot deny that.'

'Yes,' replied Clara, 'that worthy really deserved to wear his ass's head to the end of the chapter—but what of him?'

'Only conceive that he should be the very same person with that handsome Spaniard,' replied Mowbray.

'Then there is one fool fewer than I thought there was,' replied Clara with the greatest indifference.

Her brother bit his lip.

'Clara,' he said, 'I believe you are an excellent good girl, and clever to boot, but pray do not set up for wit and oddity; there is nothing in life so intolerable as pretending to think differently from other people. That gentleman was the Earl of Etherington.'

This annunciation, though made in what was meant to be an imposing tone, had no impression on Clara.

'I hope he plays the peer better than the hidalgo,' she replied carelessly.

'Yes,' answered Mowbray, 'he is one of the handsomest men of the time, and decidedly fashionable—you will like him much when you see him in private.'

'It is of little consequence whether I do or no,' answered Clara.

'You mistake the matter,' said Mowbray gravely; 'it may be of considerable consequence.'

'Indeed!' said Clara, with a smile; 'I must suppose myself, then, too important a person not to make my approbation necessary to one of your first-rates. He cannot pretend to pass muster at Saint Ronan's without it. Well, I will depute my authority to Lady Binks, and she shall pass your new recruits instead of me.'

'This is all nonsense, Clara,' said Mowbray. 'Lord Etherington calls here this very morning, and wishes to be made known to you. I expect you will receive him as a particular friend of mine.'

'With all my heart—so you will engage, after this visit, to keep him down with your other particular friends at the Well. You know it is a bargain that you bring neither buck nor pointer into my parlour—the one worries my cat, and the other my temper.'

'You mistake me entirely, Clara—this is a very different visitor from any I have ever introduced to you. I expect to see him often here, and I hope you and he will be better

friends than you think of. I have more reasons for wishing this than I have now time to tell you.'

Clara remained silent for an instant, then looked at her brother with an anxious and scrutinizing glance, as if she wished to penetrate into his inmost purpose.

'If I thought'—she said, after a minute's consideration, and with an altered and disturbed tone; 'but no—I will not think that Heaven intends me such a blow—least of all, that it should come from your hands.' She walked hastily to the window, and threw it open—then shut it again, and returned to her seat, saying, with a constrained smile, 'May Heaven forgive you, brother, but you frightened me heartily.'

'I do not mean to do so, Clara,' said Mowbray, who saw the necessity of soothing her; 'I only alluded in joke to those chances that are never out of other girls' heads, though you never seem to calculate on them.'

'I wish you, my dear John,' said Clara, struggling again to regain entire composure, 'I wish *you* would profit by my example, and give up the science of chance also—it will not avail you.'

'How d'ye know that?—I'll show you the contrary, you silly wench,' answered Mowbray—'Here is a banker's bill, payable to your own order, for the cash you lent me, and something over—don't let old Mick have the fingering, but let Bindloose manage it for you—he is the honester man between two d—d knaves.'

'Will not you, brother, send it to the man Bindloose yourself?'

'No,—no,' replied Mowbray—'he might confuse it with some of my transactions, and so you forfeit your stake.'

'Well, I am glad you are able to pay me, for I want to buy Campbell's new work.'

'I wish you joy of your purchase—but don't scratch me for not caring about it. I know as little of books as you of the long odds. And come now, be serious, and tell me if you will be a good girl—lay aside your whims, and receive this English young nobleman like a lady as you are?'

'That were easy,' said Clara—'but—but—Pray, ask no more of me than just to see him. Say to him, at once,

I am a poor creature in body, in mind, in spirits, in temper, in understanding—above all, say that I can receive him only once.'

'I shall say no such thing,' said Mowbray bluntly; 'it is good to be plain with you at once—I thought of putting off this discussion—but since it must come, the sooner it is over the better. You are to understand, Clara Mowbray, that Lord Etherington has a particular view in this visit, and that his view has my full sanction and approbation.'

'I thought so,' said Clara, in the same altered tone of voice in which she had before spoken; 'my mind foreboded this last of misfortunes! But, Mowbray, you have no child before you—I neither will nor can see this nobleman.'

'How!' exclaimed Mowbray fiercely; 'do you dare return me so peremptory an answer? Think better of it, for, if we differ, you will find you will have the worst of the game.'

'Rely upon it,' she continued with more vehemence, 'I will see him nor no man upon the footing you mention—my resolution is taken, and threats and entreaties will prove equally unavailing.'

'Upon my word, madam,' said Mowbray, 'you have, for a modest and retired young lady, plucked up a goodly spirit of your own! But you shall find mine equals it. If you do not agree to see my friend Lord Etherington, aye, and to receive him with the politeness due to the consideration I entertain for him, by Heaven! Clara, I will no longer regard you as my father's daughter. Think what you are giving up—the affection and protection of a brother—and for what?—merely for an idle point of etiquette. You cannot, I suppose, even in the workings of your romantic brain, imagine that the days of Clarissa Harlowe and Harriet Byron are come back again, when women were married by main force? and it is monstrous vanity in you to suppose that Lord Etherington, since he has honoured you with any thoughts at all, will not be satisfied with a proper and civil refusal—You are no such prize, methinks, that the days of romance are to come back for you.'

'I care not what days they are,' said Clara; 'I tell you I will not see Lord Etherington, or any one else, upon such preliminaries as you have stated—I cannot—I will not—

and I ought not. Had you meant me to receive him, which can be a matter of no consequence whatever, you should have left him on the footing of an ordinary visitor—as it is, I will not see him.'

'You *shall* see and hear him both,' said Mowbray; 'you shall find me as obstinate as you are—as willing to forget I am a brother, as you to forget that you have one.'

'It is time, then,' replied Clara, 'that this house, once our father's, should no longer hold us both. I can provide for myself, and may God bless you!'

'You take it coolly, madam,' said her brother, walking through the apartment with much anxiety both of look and gesture.

'I do,' she answered; 'for it is what I have often foreseen. Yes, brother, I have often foreseen that you would make your sister the subject of your plots and schemes, so soon as other stakes failed you. That hour is come, and I am, as you see, prepared to meet it.'

'And where may you propose to retire to?' said Mowbray. 'I think that I, your only relation and natural guardian, have a right to know that—my honour and that of my family is concerned.'

'Your honour!' she retorted, with a keen glance at him; 'your interest, I suppose you mean, is somehow connected with the place of my abode. But keep yourself patient—the den of the rock, the lin of the brook, should be my choice, rather than a palace without my freedom.'

'You are mistaken, however,' said Mowbray sternly, 'if you hope to enjoy more freedom than I think you capable of making a good use of. The law authorizes, and reason, and even affection, require that you should be put under restraint for your own safety, and that of your character. You roamed the woods a little too much in my father's time, if all stories be true.'

'I did—I did indeed, Mowbray,' said Clara, weeping; 'God pity me and forgive you for upbraiding me with my state of mind—I know I cannot sometimes trust my own judgement; but is it for you to remind me of this?'

Mowbray was at once softened and embarrassed.

'What folly is this?' he said; 'you say the most cutting things to me—are ready to fly from my house—and when

I am provoked to make an angry answer, you burst into tears!'

'Say you did not mean what you said, my dearest brother!' exclaimed Clara; 'Oh, say you did not mean it. Do not take my liberty from me—it is all I have left, and God knows, it is a poor comfort in the sorrows I undergo. I will put a fair face on everything—will go down to the Well—will wear what you please, and say what you please—but, oh! leave me the liberty of my solitude here—let me weep alone in the house of my father—and do not force a broken-hearted sister to lay her death at your door. My span must be a brief one, but let not your hand shake the sand-glass! Disturb me not—let me pass quietly—I do not ask this so much for my sake as for your own. I would have you think of me, sometimes, Mowbray, after I am gone, and without the bitter reflections which the recollection of harsh usage will assuredly bring with it. Pity me, were it but for your own sake. I have deserved nothing but compassion at your hand. There are but two of us on earth, why should we make each other miserable?'

She accompanied these entreaties with a flood of tears, and the most heart-bursting sobs. Mowbray knew not what to determine. On the one hand, he was bound by his promise to the earl; on the other, his sister was in no condition to receive such a visitor; nay, it was most probable, that if he adopted the strong measure of compelling her to receive him, her behaviour would probably be such as totally to break off the projected match, on the success of which he had founded so many castles in the air. In this dilemma, he had again recourse to argument.

'Clara,' he said, 'I am, as I have repeatedly said, your only relation and guardian—if there be any real reason why you ought not to receive, and, at least, make a civil reply to such a negotiation as the Earl of Etherington has thought fit to open, surely I ought to be entrusted with it. You enjoyed far too much of that liberty which you seem to prize so highly during my father's lifetime—in the last years of it at least—have you formed any foolish attachment during that time, which now prevents you from receiving such a visit as Lord Etherington has threatened?'

'Threatened!—the expression is well chosen,' said

Miss Mowbray ; ' and nothing can be more dreadful than such a threat, excepting its accomplishment.'

' I am glad your spirits are reviving,' replied her brother ; ' but that is no answer to my question.'

' Is it necessary,' said Clara, ' that one must have actually some engagement or entanglement, to make them unwilling to be given in marriage, or even to be pestered upon such a subject ? Many young men declare they intend to die bachelors, why may not I be permitted to commence old maid at three-and-twenty ? Let me do so, like a kind brother, and there were never nephews and nieces so petted and so scolded, so nursed and so cuffed by a maiden aunt, as your children, when you have them, shall be by Aunt Clara.'

' And why not say all this to Lord Etherington ? ' said Mowbray ; ' wait until he propose such a terrible bugbear as matrimony, before you refuse to receive him. Who knows, the whim that he hinted at may have passed away—he was, as you say, flirting with Lady Binks, and her ladyship has a good deal of address, as well as beauty.'

' Heaven improve both (in an honest way), if she will but keep his lordship to herself ! ' said Clara.

'Well, then,' continued her brother, 'things standing thus, I do not think you will have much trouble with his lordship—no more, perhaps, than just to give him a civil denial. After having spoken on such a subject to a man of my condition, he cannot well break off without you give him an apology.'

' If that is all,' said Clara, ' he shall, as soon as he gives me an opportunity, receive such an answer as will leave him at liberty to woo any one whatsoever of Eve's daughters, excepting Clara Mowbray. Methinks I am so eager to set the captive free, that I now wish as much for his lordship's appearance as I feared it a little while since.'

' Nay, nay, but let us go fair and softly,' said her brother. ' You are not to refuse him before he asks the question.'

' Certainly,' said Clara ; ' but I well know how to manage that—he shall never ask the question at all. I will restore Lady Binks's admirer, without accepting so much as a civility in ransom.'

' Worse and worse, Clara,' answered Mowbray ; ' you are to remember he is my friend and guest, and he must not be affronted in my house. Leave things to themselves.

Besides, consider an instant, Clara—had you not better take a little time for reflection in this case? The offer is a splendid one—title—fortune—and, what is more, a fortune which you will be well entitled to share largely in.'

'This is beyond our implied treaty,' said Clara. 'I have yielded more than ever I thought I should have done, when I agreed that this earl should be introduced to me on the footing of a common visitor; and now you talk favourably of his pretensions. This is an encroachment, Mowbray, and now I shall relapse into my obstinacy, and refuse to see him at all.'

'Do as you will,' replied Mowbray, sensible that it was only by working on her affections that he had any chance of carrying a point against her inclination,—'Do as you will, my dear Clara; but for Heaven's sake, wipe your eyes.'

'And behave myself,' said she, trying to smile as she obeyed him,—'behave myself, you would say, like folks of this world; but the quotation is lost on you, who never read either Prior or Shakespeare.'

'I thank Heaven for that,' said Mowbray. 'I have enough to burden my brain, without carrying such a lumber of rhymes in it as you and Lady Pen do. Come, that is right; go to the mirror, and make yourself decent.'

A woman must be much borne down indeed by pain and suffering, when she loses all respect for her external appearance. The madwoman in Bedlam wears her garland of straw with a certain air of pretension; and we have seen a widow whom we knew to be most sincerely affected by a recent deprivation, whose weeds, nevertheless, were arranged with a dolorous degree of grace, which amounted almost to coquetry. Clara Mowbray had also, negligent as she seemed to be of appearances, her own art of the toilet, although of the most rapid and most simple character. She took off her little riding-hat, and, unbinding a lace of Indian gold which retained her locks, shook them in dark and glossy profusion over her very handsome form, which they overshadowed down to her slender waist; and while her brother stood looking on her with a mixture of pride, affection, and compassion, she arranged them with a large comb, and, without the assistance of any *femme d'atours*, wove them, in the course of a few minutes, into such a natural head-dress as we see on the statues of the Grecian nymphs.

'Now let me but find my best muff,' she said; 'come prince and peer, I shall be ready to receive them.'

'Pshaw! your muff—who has heard of such a thing these twenty years? Muffs were out of fashion before you were born.'

'No matter, John,' replied his sister; 'when a woman wears a muff, especially a determined old maid like myself, it is a sign she has no intentions to scratch; and therefore the muff serves all the purposes of a white flag, and prevents the necessity of drawing on a glove, so prudentially recommended by the motto of our cousins, the M'Intoshes.'[1]

'Be it as you will, then,' said Mowbray; 'for other than you do will it, you will not suffer it to be. But how is this! another billet? We are in request this morning.'

'Now, Heaven send his lordship may have judiciously considered all the risks which he is sure to encounter on this charmed ground, and resolved to leave his adventure unattempted,' said Miss Mowbray.

Her brother glanced a look of displeasure at her as he broke the seal of the letter which was addressed to him with the words, 'Haste and secrecy,' written on the envelope. The contents, which greatly surprised him, we remit to the commencement of the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV

PRIVATE INFORMATION

Ope this letter,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouched there.—*King Lear.*

THE billet which Mowbray received, and read in his sister's presence, contained these words:—

'SIR,

'CLARA MOWBRAY has few friends—none, perhaps, excepting yourself, in right of blood, and the writer of this letter, by right of the fondest, truest, and most disinterested attachment that ever man bore to woman. I am thus

[1] The well-known crest of this ancient race is a cat rampant, with a motto bearing the caution—'Touch not the cat, but [i.e. *be out*, or without] the glove'.

explicit with you, because, though it is unlikely that I should ever again see or speak to your sister, I am desirous that you should be clearly acquainted with the cause of that interest, which I must always, even to my dying breath, take in her affairs.

'The person, calling himself Lord Etherington, is, I am aware, in the neighbourhood of Shaws Castle, with the intention of paying his addresses to Miss Mowbray; and it is easy for me to foresee, arguing according to the ordinary views of mankind, that he may place his proposals in such a light as may make them seem highly desirable. But ere you give this person the encouragement which his offers may seem to deserve, please to inquire whether his fortune is certain, or his rank indisputable; and be not satisfied with light evidence on either point. A man may be in possession of an estate and title to which he has no better right than his own rapacity and forwardness of assumption; and supposing Mr. Mowbray jealous, as he must be, of the honour of his family, the alliance of such a one cannot but bring disgrace. This comes from one who will make good what he has written.'

On the first perusal of a billet so extraordinary, Mowbray was inclined to set it down to the malice of some of the people at the Well, anonymous letters being no uncommon resource of the small wits who frequent such places of general resort, as a species of deception safely and easily executed, and well calculated to produce much mischief and confusion. But upon closer consideration, he was shaken in his opinion, and, starting suddenly from the reverie into which he had fallen, asked for the messenger who had brought the letter. 'He was in the hall,' the servant thought, and Mowbray ran to the hall. No—the messenger was not there, but Mowbray might see his back as he walked up the avenue. He halloed—no answer was returned—he ran after the fellow, whose appearance was that of a countryman. The man quickened his pace as he saw himself pursued, and when he got out of the avenue, threw himself into one of the numerous bypaths which wanderers, who strayed in quest of nuts, or for the sake of exercise, had made in various directions through the

extensive copse which surrounded the castle, and were doubtless the reason of its acquiring the name of Shaws, which signifies, in the Scottish dialect, a wood of this description.

Irritated by the man's obvious desire to avoid him, and naturally obstinate in all his resolutions, Mowbray pursued for a considerable way, until he fairly lost breath; and the flier having been long out of sight, he recollected at length that his engagement with the Earl of Etherington required his attendance at the Castle.

The young lord, indeed, had arrived at Shaws Castle, so few minutes after Mowbray's departure, that it was wonderful they had not met in the avenue. The servant to whom he applied, conceiving that his master must return instantly, as he had gone out without his hat, ushered the earl, without further ceremony, into the breakfast-room, where Clara was seated upon one of the window-seats, so busily employed with a book, or perhaps with her own thoughts while she held a book in her hands, that she scarce raised her head, until Lord Etherington, advancing, pronounced the words, 'Miss Mowbray.' A start, and a loud scream, announced her deadly alarm, and these were repeated as he made one pace nearer, and in a firmer accent said, 'Clara.'

'No nearer—no nearer,' she exclaimed, 'if you would have me look upon you and live!' Lord Etherington remained standing, as if uncertain whether to advance or retreat, while with incredible rapidity she poured out her hurried entreaties that he would begone, sometimes addressing him as a real personage, sometimes, and more frequently, as a delusive phantom, the offspring of her own excited imagination. 'I knew it,' she muttered, 'I knew what would happen, if my thoughts were forced into that fearful channel. Speak to me, brother! speak to me while I have reason left, and tell me that what stands before me is but an empty shadow! But it is no shadow—it remains before me in all the lineaments of mortal substance!'

'Clara,' said the earl, with a firm, yet softened voice, 'collect and compose yourself. I am, indeed, no shadow—I am a much-injured man, come to demand rights which have been unjustly withheld from me. I am now armed with power as well as justice, and my claims shall be heard.'

Never—never!' replied Clara Mowbray · 'since extremity

is my portion, let extremity give me courage. You have no rights—none—I know you not, and I defy you.'

'Defy me not, Clara Mowbray,' answered the earl, in a tone, and with a manner—how different from those which delighted society! for now he was solemn, tragic, and almost stern, like the judge when he passes sentence upon a criminal. 'Defy me not,' he repeated. 'I am your fate, and it rests with you to make me a kind or severe one.'

'Dare you speak thus?' said Clara, her eyes flashing with anger, while her lips grew white, and quivered for fear—'Dare you speak thus, and remember that the same heaven is above our heads to which you so solemnly vowed you would never see me more without my own consent?'

'That vow was conditional—Francis Tyrrel, as he calls himself, swore the same—hath *he* not seen you?' He fixed a piercing look on her; 'He has—you dare not disown it! And shall an oath, which to him is but a cobweb, be to me a shackle of iron?'

'Alas! it was but for a moment,' said Miss Mowbray, sinking in courage, and drooping her head as she spoke.

'Were it but the twentieth part of an instant—the least conceivable space of subdivided time—still, you *did* meet—he saw you—you spoke to him. And me also you must see—me also you must hear! Or I will first claim you for my own in the face of the world; and, having vindicated my rights, I will seek out and extinguish the wretched rival who has dared to interfere with them.'

'Can you speak thus?' said Clara; 'can you so burst through the ties of nature? Have you a heart?'

'I have; and it shall be moulded like wax to your slightest wishes, if you agree to do me justice; but not granite, nor aught else that nature has of hardest, will be more inflexible if you continue a useless opposition!—Clara Mowbray, I am your Fate.'

'Not so, proud man,' said Clara, rising, 'God gave not one potsherd the power to break another, save by His divine permission—my fate is in the will of Him, without whose will even a sparrow falls not to the ground. Be gone—I am strong in faith of heavenly protection.'

'Do you speak thus in sincerity?' said the Earl of Etherington; 'consider first what is the prospect before

you. I stand here in no doubtful or ambiguous character—I offer not the mere name of a husband—propose to you not a humble lot of obscurity and hardship, with fears for the past, and doubts for the future ; yet there *was* a time when to a suit like this you could listen favourably. I stand high among the nobles of the country, and offer you, as my bride, your share in my honours, and in the wealth which becomes them. Your brother is my friend, and favours my suit. I will raise from the ground, and once more render illustrious, your ancient house—your motions shall be regulated by your wishes, even by your caprices—I will even carry my self-denial so far, that you shall, should you insist on so severe a measure, have your own residence, your own establishment, and without intrusion on my part, until the most devoted love, the most unceasing attentions, shall make way on your inflexible disposition. All this I will consent to for the future—all that is passed shall be concealed from the public. But mine, Clara Mowbray, you must be.'

'Never—never!' she said, with increasing vehemence. 'I can but repeat a negative, but it shall have all the force of an oath. Your rank is nothing to me—your fortune I scorn—my brother has no right, by the law of Scotland, or of nature, to compel my inclinations. I detest your treachery, and I scorn the advantage you propose to attain by it. Should the law give you my hand, it would but award you that of a corpse.'

'Alas! Clara,' said the earl, 'you do but flutter in the net ; but I will urge you no further now—there is another encounter before me.'

He was turning away, when Clara, springing forward, caught him by the arm, and repeated, in a low and impressive voice, the commandment,—'Thou shalt do no murder!'

'Fear not any violence,' he said, softening his voice, and attempting to take her hand, 'but what may flow from your own severity. Francis is safe from me, unless you are altogether unreasonable. Allow me but what you cannot deny to any friend of your brother, the power of seeing you at times—suspend at least the impetuosity of your dislike to me, and I will, on my part, modify the current of my just and otherwise uncontrollable resentment.'

Clara, extricating herself, and retreating from him, only replied, 'There is a Heaven above us, and THERE shall be judged our actions towards each other! You abuse a power most treacherously obtained—you break a heart that never did you wrong—you seek an alliance with a wretch who only wishes to be wedded to her grave. If my brother brings you hither, I cannot help it—and if your coming prevents bloody and unnatural violence, it is so far well. But by my consent you come *not*; and were the choice mine, I would rather be struck with life-long blindness, than that my eyes should again open on your person—rather that my ears were stuffed with the earth of the grave, than that they should again hear your voice!'

The Earl of Etherington smiled proudly, and replied, 'Even this, madam, I can hear without resentment. Anxious and careful as you are to deprive your compliance of every grace and of every kindness, I receive the permission to wait on you, as I interpret your words.'

'Do not so interpret them,' she replied; 'I do but submit to your presence as an unavoidable evil. Heaven be my witness, that, were it not to prevent greater and more desperate evil, I would not even so far acquiesce.'

'Let acquiescence, then, be the word,' he said; 'and so thankful will I be, even for your acquiescence, Miss Mowbray, that all shall remain private, which I conceive you do not wish to be disclosed; and, unless absolutely compelled to it in self-defence, you may rely, no violence will be resorted to by me in any quarter. I relieve you from my presence.'

So saying, he withdrew from the apartment.

CHAPTER XXV

EXPLANATORY

—— By your leave, gentle wax.—SHAKESPEARE.

IN the hall of Shaws Castle the Earl of Etherington met Mowbray, returned from his fruitless chase after the bearer of the anonymous epistle before recited; and who had but just learned, on his return, that the Earl of Etherington was with his sister. There was a degree of mutual

confusion when they met; for Mowbray had the contents of the anonymous letter fresh in his mind, and Lord Etherington, notwithstanding all the coolness which he endeavoured to maintain, had not gone through the scene with Clara without discomposure. Mowbray asked the earl whether he had seen his sister, and invited him, at the same time, to return to the parlour; and his lordship replied, in a tone as indifferent as he could assume, that he

THE HALL AT SHAWS CASTLE

had enjoyed the honour of the lady's company for several minutes, and would not now intrude further upon Miss Mowbray's patience.

'You have had such a reception as was agreeable, my lord, I trust?' said Mowbray. 'I hope Clara did the honours of the house with propriety during my absence?'

'Miss Mowbray seemed a little fluttered with my sudden appearance,' said the earl; 'the servant showed me in rather abruptly; and, circumstanced as we were, there is

always awkwardness in a first meeting, where there is no third party to act as master of the ceremonies. I suspect, from the lady's looks, that you have not quite kept my secret, my good friend. I myself, too, felt a little consciousness in approaching Miss Mowbray—but it is over now; and, the ice being fairly broken, I hope to have other and more convenient opportunities to improve the advantage I have just gained in acquiring your lovely sister's personal acquaintance.'

'So be it,' said Mowbray; 'but, as you declare for leaving the castle just now, I must first speak a single word with your lordship, for which this place is not altogether convenient.'

'I can have no objections, my dear Jack,' said Etherington, following him with a thrill of conscious feeling, somewhat perhaps like that of the spider when he perceives his deceitful web is threatened with injury, and sits balanced in the centre, watching every point, and uncertain which he may be called upon first to defend. Such is one part, and not the slightest part, of the penance which never fails to wait on those who, abandoning the 'fair play of the world,' endeavour to work out their purposes by a process of deception and intrigue.

'My lord,' said Mowbray, when they had entered a little apartment, in which the latter kept his guns, fishing-tackle, and other implements of sport, 'you have played on the square with me; nay, more—I am bound to allow you have given me great odds. I am therefore not entitled to hear any reports to the prejudice of your lordship's character, without instantly communicating them. There is an anonymous letter which I have just received. Perhaps your lordship may know the hand, and thus be enabled to detect the writer.'

'I do know the hand,' said the earl, as he received the note from Mowbray; 'and, allow me to say, it is the only one which could have dared to frame any calumny to my prejudice. I hope, Mr. Mowbray, it is impossible for you to consider this infamous charge as anything but a falsehood?'

'My placing it in your lordship's hands, without further inquiry, is a sufficient proof that I hold it such, my lord;

at the same time that I cannot doubt for a moment that your lordship has it in your power to overthrow so frail a calumny by the most satisfactory evidence.'

'Unquestionably I can, Mr. Mowbray,' said the earl; 'for, besides my being in full possession of the estate and title of my father, the late Earl of Etherington, I have my father's contract of marriage, my own certificate of baptism, and the evidence of the whole country, to establish my right. All these shall be produced with the least delay possible. You will not think it surprising that one does not travel with this sort of documents in one's post-chaise.'

'Certainly not, my lord,' said Mowbray; 'it is sufficient they are forthcoming when called for. But, may I inquire, my lord, who the writer of this letter is, and whether he has any particular spleen to gratify by this very impudent assertion, which is so easily capable of being disproved?'

'He is,' said Etherington, 'or, at least, has the reputation of being, I am sorry to say, a near—a very near relation of my own—in fact, a brother by the father's side, but illegitimate. My father was fond of him—I loved him also, for he has uncommonly fine parts, and is accounted highly accomplished. But there is a train of something irregular in his mind—a vein, in short, of madness, which breaks out in the usual manner, rendering the poor young man a dupe to vain imaginations of his own dignity and grandeur, which is perhaps the most ordinary effect of insanity, and inspiring the deepest aversion against his nearest relatives, and against myself in particular. He is a man extremely plausible, both in speech and manners; so much so, that many of my friends think there is more vice than insanity in the irregularities which he commits; but I may, I hope, be forgiven, if I have formed a milder judgement of one supposed to be my father's son. Indeed, I cannot help being sorry for poor Frank, who might have made a very distinguished figure in the world.'

'May I ask the gentleman's name, my lord?' said Mowbray.

'My father's indulgence gave him our family name of Tyrrel, with his own Christian name Francis; but his proper name, to which alone he has a right, is Martigny.'

'Francis Tyrrel!' exclaimed Mowbray; 'why, that is

the name of the very person who made some disturbance at the Well just before your lordship arrived. You may have seen an advertisement—a sort of placard.'

'I have, Mr. Mowbray,' said the earl. 'Spare me on that subject, if you please—it has formed a strong reason why I did not mention my connexion with this unhappy man before; but it is no unusual thing for persons, whose imaginations are excited, to rush into causeless quarrels, and then to make discreditable retreats from them.'

'Or,' said Mr. Mowbray, 'he may have, after all, been prevented from reaching the place of rendezvous—it was that very day on which your lordship, I think, received your wound; and, if I mistake not, you hit the man from whom you got the hurt.'

'Mowbray,' said Lord Etherington, lowering his voice, and taking him by the arm, 'it is true that I did so, and truly glad am I to observe, that, whatever might have been the consequences of such an accident, they cannot have been serious. It struck me afterwards, that the man by whom I was so strangely assaulted, had some resemblance to the unfortunate Tyrrel—but I had not seen him for years. At any rate, he cannot have been much hurt, since he is now able to resume his intrigues to the prejudice of my character.'

'Your lordship views the thing with a firm eye,' said Mowbray; 'firmer than I think most people would be able to command, who had so narrow a chance of a scrape so uncomfortable.'

'Why, I am, in the first place, by no means sure that the risk existed,' said the Earl of Etherington; 'for, as I have often told you, I had but a very transient glimpse of the ruffian; and, in the second place, I *am* sure that no permanent bad consequences have ensued. I am too old a fox-hunter to be afraid of a leap after it is cleared, as they tell of the fellow who fainted in the morning at the sight of the precipice he had clambered over when he was drunk on the night before. The man who wrote that letter,' touching it with his finger, 'is alive, and able to threaten me; and if he did come to any hurt from my hand, it was in the act of attempting my life, of which I shall carry the mark to my grave.'

'Nay, I am far from blaming your lordship,' said Mowbray, 'for what you did in self-defence, but the circumstance might have turned out very unpleasant. May I ask what you intend to do with this unfortunate gentleman, who is in all probability in the neighbourhood?'

'I must first discover the place of his retreat,' said Lord Etherington, 'and then consider what is to be done, both for his safety, poor fellow, and my own. It is probable, too, that he may find sharpers to prey upon what fortune he still possesses, which, I assure you, is sufficient to attract a set of folk, who may ruin while they humour him. May I beg that you, too, will be on the outlook, and let me know if you hear or see more of him?'

'I shall, most certainly, my lord,' answered Mowbray: 'but the only one of his haunts which I know is the old Cleikum Inn, where he chose to take up his residence. He has now left it, but perhaps the old crab-fish of a landlady may know something of him.'

'I will not fail to inquire,' said Lord Etherington; and, with these words, he took a kind farewell of Mowbray, mounted his horse, and rode up the avenue.

'A cool fellow,' said Mowbray, as he looked after him, 'a d—d cool fellow, this brother-in-law of mine that is to be—takes a shot at his father's son with as little remorse as at a black-cock—what would he do with me, were we to quarrel? Well, I can snuff a candle and strike out the ace of hearts; and so, should things go wrong, he has no Jack Raw to deal with, but Jack Mowbray.'

Meanwhile the Earl of Etherington hastened home to his own apartments at the hotel; and, not entirely pleased with the events of the day, commenced a letter to his correspondent, agent, and confidant, Captain Jekyl, which we have fortunately the means of presenting to our readers.

'FRIEND HARRY,

'They say a falling house is best known by the rats leaving it—a fallen state, by the desertion of confederates and allies—and a falling man, by the desertion of his friends. If this be true augury, your last letter may be considered as ominous of my breaking down. Methinks, you have

gone far enough, and shared deep enough with me, to have some confidence in my *savoir faire*—some little faith both in my means and management. What cross-grained fiend has at once inspired you with what I suppose you wish me to call politic doubts and scruples of conscience, but which I can only regard as symptoms of fear and disaffection? You can have no idea of "duels betwixt relations so nearly connected"—and "the affair seems very delicate and intricate"—and again, "the matter has never been fully explained to you"—and, moreover, "if you are expected to take an active part in the business, it must be when you are honoured with my full and unreserved confidence, otherwise how could you be of the use to me which I might require?" Such are your expressions.

'Now, as to scruples of conscience about near relations, and so forth, all that has blown by without much mischief, and certainly is not likely to occur again—besides, did you never hear of friends quarrelling before? And are they not to exercise the usual privileges of gentlemen when they do? Moreover, how am I to know that this plaguy fellow *is* actually related to me? They say it is a wise child knows its own father; and I cannot be expected wise enough to know to a certainty my father's son. So much for relationship. Then, as to full and unreserved confidence —why, Harry, this is just as if I were to ask you to look at a watch, and tell what it was o'clock, and you were to reply, that truly you could not inform me, because you had not examined the springs, the counter-balances, the wheels, and the whole internal machinery of the little timepiece. But the upshot of the whole is this,—Harry Jekyl, who is as sharp a fellow as any other, thinks he has his friend Lord Etherington at a deadlock, and that he knows already so much of the said noble lord's history as to oblige his lordship to tell him the whole. And perhaps he not unreasonably concludes, that the custody of a whole secret is more creditable, and probably more lucrative, than that of a half one; and, in short, he is resolved to make the most of the cards in his hand. Another, mine honest Harry, would take the trouble to recall to your mind past times and circumstances, and conclude with expressing a humble opinion, that if Harry Jekyl were asked *now* to do any service for

the noble lord aforesaid, Harry had got his reward in his pocket aforehand. But I do not argue thus, because I would rather be leagued with a friend who assists me with a view to future profit, than from respect to benefits already received. The first lies like the fox's scent when on his last legs, increasing every moment; the other is a back-scent, growing colder the longer you follow it, until at last it becomes impossible to puzzle it out. I will, therefore, submit to the circumstances, and tell you the whole story, though somewhat tedious, in hopes that I can conclude with such a trail as you will open upon breast high.

'Thus then it was. Francis, fifth Earl of Etherington, and my much honoured father, was what is called a very eccentric man—that is, he was neither a wise man nor a fool—had too much sense to walk into a well, and yet in some of the furious fits which he was visited with, I have seen him quite mad enough to throw any one else into it. Men said there was a lurking insanity—but it is an ill bird, &c., and I will say no more about it. This shatter-brained peer was, in other respects, a handsome, accomplished man, with an expression somewhat haughty, yet singularly pleasing when he chose it—a man, in short, who might push his fortune with the fair sex.

'Lord Etherington, such as I have described him, being upon his travels in France, formed an attachment of the heart—aye, and some have pretended, of the hand also, with a certain beautiful orphan, Marie de Martigny. Of this union is said to have sprung (for I am determined not to be certain on that point) that most incommodious person, Francis Tyrrel, as he calls himself, but as I would rather call him, Francis Martigny; the latter suiting my views, as perhaps the former name agrees better with his pretensions. Now, I am too good a son to subscribe to the alleged regularity of the marriage between my right honourable and very good lord father, because my said right honourable and very good lord did, on his return to England, become wedded, in the face of the Church, to my very affectionate and well-endowed mother, Ann Bulmer of Bulmer Hall, from which happy union sprang I, Francis Valentine Bulmer Tyrrel, lawful inheritor of my father and mother's joint estates, as I was the proud

possessor of their ancient names. But the noble and wealthy pair, though blessed with such a pledge of love as myself, lived mighty ill together, and the rather, when my right honourable father, sending for this other Sosia, this unlucky Francis Tyrrel, senior, from France, insisted, in the face of propriety, that he should reside in his house, and share, in all respects, in the opportunities of education by which the real Sosia, Francis Valentine Bulmer Tyrrel, then commonly called Lord Oakendale, hath profited in such an uncommon degree.

'Various were the matrimonial quarrels which arose between the honoured lord and lady, in consequence of this unseemly conjunction of the legitimate and illegitimate; and to these, we, the subjects of the dispute, were sometimes very properly, as well as decorously, made the witnesses. On one occasion, my right honourable mother, who was a free-spoken lady, found the language of her own rank quite inadequate to express the strength of her generous feelings, and borrowing from the vulgar two emphatic words, applied them to Marie de Martigny, and her son, Francis Tyrrel. Never did earl that ever wore coronet fly into a pitch of more uncontrollable rage, than did my right honourable father; and, in the ardour of his reply, he adopted my mother's phraseology, to inform her, that if there *was* a whore and bastard connected with his house, it was herself and her brat.

'I was even then a sharp little fellow, and was incredibly struck with the communication, which, in an hour of uncontrollable irritation, had escaped my right honourable father. It is true, he instantly gathered himself up again; and, he perhaps recollecting such a word as *bigamy*, and my mother, on her side, considering the consequences of such a thing as a descent from the Countess of Etherington into Mrs. Bulmer, neither wife, maid, nor widow, there was an apparent reconciliation between them, which lasted for some time. But the speech remained deeply imprinted on my remembrance; the more so, that once, when I was exerting over my friend, Francis Tyrrel, the authority of a legitimate brother, and Lord Oakendale, old Cecil, my father's confidential valet, was so much scandalized, as to intimate a possibility that we might one day change

conditions. These two accidental communications seemed to me a key to certain long lectures, with which my father used to regale us boys, but me in particular, upon the extreme mutability of human affairs,—the disappointment of the best-grounded hopes and expectations,—and the necessity of being so accomplished in all useful branches of knowledge, as might, in case of accidents, supply any defalcation in our rank and fortune ;—as if any art or science could make amends for the loss of an earldom, and twelve thousand a year ! All this prosing seemed to my anxious mind designed to prepare me for some unfortunate change ; and when I was old enough to make such private inquiries as lay in my power, I became still more persuaded that my right honourable father nourished some thoughts of making an honest woman of Marie de Martigny, and a legitimate elder brother of Francis, after his death at least, if not during his life. I was the more convinced of this, when a little affair, which I chanced to have with the daughter of my tu——, drew down my father's wrath upon me in great abundance, and occasioned my being banished to Scotland, along with my brother, under a very poor allowance, without introductions, except to one steady, or call it rusty, old professor, and with the charge that I should not assume the title of Lord Oakendale, but content myself with my maternal grandfather's name of Valentine Bulmer, that of Francis Tyrrel being pre-occupied.

'Upon this occasion, notwithstanding the fear which I entertained of my father's passionate temper, I did venture to say, that since I was to resign my title, I thought I had a right to keep my family name, and that my brother might take his mother's. I wish you had seen the look of rage with which my father regarded me when I gave him this spirited hint. "Thou art"—he said, and paused, as if to find out the bitterest epithet to supply the blank —"thou art thy mother's child, and her perfect picture" (this seemed the severest reproach that occurred to him). "Bear her name then, and bear it with patience and in secrecy ; or, I here give you my word, you shall never bear another the whole days of your life." This sealed my mouth with a witness ; and then, in allusion to my flirtation with the daughter of my tu—— aforesaid, he

enlarged on the folly and iniquity of private marriages, warned me that in the country I was going to the matrimonial noose often lies hid under flowers, and that folks find it twitched round their neck when they least expect such a cravat; assured me, that he had very particular views for settling Francis and me in life, and he would forgive neither of us who should, by any such rash entanglement, render them unavailing.

'This last minatory admonition was the more tolerable, that my rival had his share of it; and so we were bundled off to Scotland, coupled up like two pointers in a dog-cart, and—I can speak for one at least—with much the same uncordial feeling towards each other. I often, indeed, detected Francis looking at me with a singular expression, as of pity and anxiety, and once or twice he seemed disposed to enter on something respecting the situation in which we stood towards each other; but I felt no desire to encourage his confidence. Meantime, as we were called, by our father's directions, not brothers, but cousins, so we came to bear towards each other the habits of companionship, though scarcely of friendship. What Francis thought, I know not; for my part, I must confess, that I lay by on the watch for some opportunity when I might mend my own situation with my father, though at the prejudice of my rival. And Fortune, while she seemed to prevent such an opportunity, involved us both in one of the strangest and most entangled mazes that her capricious divinityship ever wove, and out of which I am even now struggling, by sleight or force, to extricate myself. I can hardly help wondering, even yet, at the odd conjunction, which has produced such an intricacy of complicated incidents.

'My father was a great sportsman, and Francis and I had both inherited his taste for field-sports, but I in a keener and more ecstatic degree. Edinburgh, which is a tolerable residence in winter and spring, becomes disagreeable in summer, and in autumn is the most melancholy *séjour* that ever poor mortals were condemned to. No public places are open, no inhabitant of any consideration remains in the town; those who cannot get away, hide themselves in obscure corners, as if ashamed to be seen in the streets. The gentry go to their country-houses—

the citizens to their sea-bathing quarters—the lawyers to their circuits—the writers to visit their country clients—and all the world to the moors to shoot grouse. We, who felt the indignity of remaining in town during this deserted season, obtained, with some difficulty, permission from the earl to betake ourselves to any obscure corner, and shoot grouse, if we could get leave to do so on our general character of English students at the University of Edinburgh, without quoting anything more.

'The first year of our banishment we went to the neighbourhood of the Highlands; but finding our sport interrupted by gamekeepers and their gillies, on the second occasion we established ourselves at this little village of Saint Ronan's, where there were then no spa, no fine people, no card tables, no quizzes, excepting the old quiz of a landlady with whom we lodged. We found the place much to our mind; the old landlady had interest with some old fellow, agent of a non-residing nobleman, who gave us permission to sport over his moors, of which I availed myself keenly, and Francis with more moderation. He was, indeed, of a grave musing sort of a habit, and often preferred solitary walks, in the wild and beautiful scenery with which the village is surrounded, to the use of the gun. He was attached to fishing, moreover, that dullest of human amusements, and this also tended to keep us considerably apart. This gave me rather pleasure than concern;—not that I hated Francis at that time; nay, not that I greatly disliked his society; but merely because it was unpleasant to be always with one whose fortunes I looked upon as standing in direct opposition to my own. I also rather despised the indifference about sport, which indeed seemed to grow upon him; but my gentleman had better taste than I was aware of. If he sought no grouse on the hill, he had flushed a pheasant in the wood.

'Clara Mowbray, daughter of the lord of the more picturesque than wealthy domain of Saint Ronan's, was at that time scarce sixteen years old, and as wild and beautiful a woodland nymph as the imagination can fancy—simple as a child in all that concerned the world and its ways, acute as a needle in every point of knowledge which she had found an opportunity of becoming acquainted with;

fearing harm from no one, and with a lively and natural strain of wit which brought amusement and gaiety wherever she came. Her motions were under no restraint, save that of her own inclination ; for her father, though a cross, peevish old man, was confined to his chair with the gout, and her only companion, a girl somewhat of inferior caste, bred up in the utmost deference to Miss Mowbray's fancies, served for company indeed in her strolls through the wild country on foot and on horseback, but never thought of interfering with her will and pleasure.

'The extreme loneliness of the country (at that time), and the simplicity of its inhabitants, seemed to render these excursions perfectly safe. Francis, happy dog, became the companion of the damsels on such occasions through the following accident. Miss Mowbray had dressed herself and her companion like country wenches, with a view to surprise the family of one of their better sort of farmers. They had accomplished their purpose greatly to their satisfaction, and were hieing home after sunset, when they were encountered by a country fellow—a sort of Harry Jekyl in his way—who, being equipped with a glass or two of whisky, saw not the nobility of blood through her disguise, and accosted the daughter of a hundred sires as he would have done a ewe-milker. Miss Mowbray remonstrated—her companion screamed—up came cousin Francis with a fowling-piece on his shoulder, and soon put the sylvan to flight.

'This was the beginning of an acquaintance, which had gone great lengths before I found it out. The fair Clara, it seems, found it safer to roam in the woods with an escort than alone, and my studious and sentimental relative was almost her constant companion. At their age it was likely that some time might pass ere they came to understand each other ; but full confidence and intimacy was established between them ere I heard of their amour.

'And here, Harry, I must pause till next morning, and send you the conclusion under a separate cover. The rap which I had over the elbow the other day, is still tingling at the end of my fingers, and you must not be critical with my manuscript.'

CHAPTER XXVI

LETTER CONTINUED

——Must I then ravel out
My weaved-up follies ?
SHAKESPEARE.

'I RESUME my pen, Harry, to mention, without attempting to describe my surprise, that Francis, compelled by circumstances, made me the confidant of his love-intrigue. My grave cousin in love, and very much in the mind of approaching the perilous verge of clandestine marriage—he who used every now and then, not much to the improvement of our cordial regard, to lecture me upon filial duty, just upon the point of slipping the bridle himself ! I could not for my life tell whether surprise, or a feeling of mischievous satisfaction, was predominant. I tried to talk to him as he used to talk to me ; but I had not the gift of persuasion, or he the power of understanding the words of wisdom. He insisted our situation was different—that his unhappy birth, as he termed it, freed him at least from dependence on his father's absolute will—that he had, by bequest from some relative of his mother, a moderate competence, which Miss Mowbray had consented to share with him ; in fine, that he desired not my counsel but my assistance. A moment's consideration convinced me, that I should be unkind, not to him only, but to myself, unless I gave him all the backing I could in this his most dutiful scheme. I recollected our right honourable father's denunciations against Scottish marriages, and secret marriages of all sorts,—denunciations perhaps not the less vehement that he might feel some secret prick of conscience on the subject himself. I remembered that my grave brother had always been a favourite, and I forgot not—how was it possible I could forget ?—those ominous expressions, which intimated a possibility of the hereditary estate and honours being transferred to the elder, instead of the younger son. Now, it required no conjurer to foresee, that should Francis commit this inexpiable crime of secretly allying himself with a Scottish beauty, our sire would lose all wish to accomplish such a transference in his favour ;

and while my brother's merits were altogether obscured by such an unpardonable act of disobedience, my own, no longer overshadowed by prejudice or partiality, would shine forth in all their natural brilliancy. These considerations, which flashed on me with the rapidity of lightning, induced me to consent to hold Frank's back-hand, during the perilous game he proposed to play. I had only to take care that my own share in the matter should not be so prominent as to attract my father's attention; and this I was little afraid of, for his wrath was usually of that vehement and forcible character, which, like lightning, is attracted to one single point, there bursting with violence as undivided as it was uncontrollable.

'I soon found the lovers needed my assistance more than I could have supposed; for they were absolute novices in any sort of intrigue, which to me seemed as easy and natural as lying. Francis had been detected by some tattling spy in his walks with Clara, and the news had been carried to old Mowbray, who was greatly incensed at his daughter, though little knowing that her crime was greater than admitting an unknown English student to form a personal acquaintance with her. He prohibited further intercourse—resolved, in justice-of-peace phrase, to rid the country of us; and, prudently sinking all mention of his daughter's delinquency, commenced an action against Francis, under pretext of punishing him as an encroacher upon his game, but in reality to scare him from the neighbourhood. His person was particularly described to all the keepers and satellites about Shaws Castle, and any personal intercourse betwixt him and Clara became impossible, except under the most desperate risks. Nay, such was their alarm, that Master Francis thought it prudent, for Miss Mowbray's sake, to withdraw as far as a town called Marchthorn, and there to conceal himself, maintaining his intercourse with Clara only by letter.

'It was then I became the sheet-anchor of the hope of the lovers; it was then my early dexterity and powers of contrivance were first put to the test; and it would be too long to tell you in how many shapes, and by how many contrivances, I acted as agent, letter-carrier, and go-between, to maintain the intercourse of these separated

turtles. I have had a good deal of trouble in that way on my own account, but never half so much as I took on account of this brace of lovers. I scaled walls and swam rivers, set blood-hounds, quarter-staves, and blunderbusses at defiance; and excepting the distant prospect of self-interest which I have hinted at, I was neither to have honour nor reward for my pains. I will own to you, that Clara Mowbray was so very beautiful—so absolutely confiding in her lover's friend—and thrown into such close intercourse with me, that there were times when I thought that, in conscience, she ought not to have scrupled to have contributed a mite to reward the faithful labourer. But then, she looked like purity itself; and I was such a novice at that time of day, that I did not know how it might have been possible for me to retreat, if I had made too bold an advance—and, in short, I thought it best to content myself with assisting true love to run smooth, in the hope that its course would assure me, in the long-run, an earl's title, and an earl's fortune.

'Nothing was, therefore, ventured on my part which could raise suspicion, and, as the confidential friend of the lovers, I prepared everything for their secret marriage. The pastor of the parish agreed to perform the ceremony, prevailed upon by an argument which I used to him, and which Clara, had she guessed it, would have little thanked me for. I led the honest man to believe, that, in declining to do his office, he might prevent a too successful lover from doing justice to a betrayed maiden; and the parson, who, I found, had a spice of romance in his disposition, resolved, under such pressing circumstances, to do them the kind office of binding them together, although the consequence might be a charge of irregularity against himself. Old Mowbray was much confined to his room, his daughter less watched since Frank had removed from the neighbourhood—the brother (which, by the by, I should have said before) not then in the country—and it was settled that the lovers should meet at the Old Kirk of Saint Ronan's when the twilight became deep, and go off in a chaise for England so soon as the ceremony was performed.

'When all this was arranged save the actual appointment of the day, you cannot conceive the happiness and the

gratitude of my sage brother. He looked upon himself as approaching to the seventh heaven, instead of losing his chance of a good fortune, and encumbering himself at nineteen with a wife, and all the probabilities of narrow circumstances, and an increasing family. Though so much younger myself, I could not help wondering at his extreme want of knowledge of the world, and feeling ashamed that I had ever allowed him to take the airs of a tutor with me; and this conscious superiority supported me against the thrill of jealousy which always seized me when I thought of his carrying off the beautiful prize, which, without my address, he could never have made his own. But at this important crisis, I had a letter from my father, which, by some accident, had long lain at our lodgings in Edinburgh—had then visited our former quarters in the Highlands—again returned to Edinburgh—and at length reached me at Marchthorn in a most critical time.

'It was in reply to a letter of mine, in which, among other matters, such as good boys send to their papas, descriptions of the country, accounts of studies, exercises, and so forth, I had, to fill up the sheet to a dutiful length, thrown in something about the family of Saint Ronan's, in the neighbourhood of which I was writing. I had no idea what an effect the name would produce on the mind of my right honourable father, but his letter sufficiently expressed it. He charged me to cultivate the acquaintance of Mr. Mowbray as fast and as intimately as possible; and, if need were, to inform him candidly of our real character and situation in life. Wisely considering, at the same time, that his filial admonition might be neglected if not backed by some sufficient motive, his lordship frankly let me into the secret of my grand-uncle by the mother's side, Mr. S. Mowbray of Nettlewood's last will and testament, by which I saw, to my astonishment and alarm, that a large and fair estate was bequeathed to the eldest son and heir of the Earl of Etherington, on condition of his forming a matrimonial alliance with a lady of the house of Mowbray of Saint Ronan's. Mercy of Heaven! how I stared! Here had I been making every preparation for wedding Francis to the very girl whose hand would insure to myself wealth and independence!—And even the first loss, though

great, was not likely to be the last. My father spoke of the marriage like a land-surveyor, but of the estate of Nettlewood like an impassioned lover. He seemed to dote on every acre of it, and dwelt on its contiguity to his own domains as a circumstance which rendered the union of the estates not desirable merely, but constituted an arrangement pointed out by the hand of nature. And although he observed that, on account of the youth of the parties, a treaty of marriage could not be immediately undertaken, it was yet clear he would approve at heart of any bold stroke which would abolish the interval of time that might otherwise intervene, ere Oakendale and Nettlewood became one property.

'Here, then, were shipwrecked my fair hopes. It was clear as sunshine, that a private marriage, unpardonable in the abstract, would become venial, nay, highly laudable, in my father's eyes, if it united his heir with Clara Mowbray; and if he really had, as my fears suggested, the means of establishing legitimacy on my brother's part, nothing was so likely to tempt him to use them as the certainty that, by his doing so, Nettlewood and Oakendale would be united into one. The very catastrophe which I had prepared, as sure to exclude my rival from his father's favour, was thus likely, unless it could be prevented, to become a strong motive and argument for the earl placing his rights above mine.

'I shut myself up in my bedroom, locked the door, read and again read my father's letter, and, instead of giving way to idle passion (beware of that, Harry, even in the most desperate circumstances), I considered, with keen investigation, whether some remedy could not yet be found. To break off the match for the time, would have been easy—a little private information to Mr. Mowbray would have done that with a vengeance—but then the treaty might be renewed under my father's auspices; at all events, the share which I had taken in the intrigue between Clara and my brother rendered it almost impossible for me to become a suitor in my own person. Amid these perplexities, it suddenly occurred to my adventurous heart and contriving brain—what if I should personate the bridegroom? This strange thought, you will recollect,

occurred to a very youthful brain—it was banished—it returned—returned again and again—was viewed under every different shape—became familiar—was adopted. It was easy to fix the appointment with Clara and the clergyman, for I managed the whole correspondence—the resemblance between Francis and me in stature and in proportion—the disguise which we were to assume—the darkness of the church—the hurry of the moment—might, I trusted, prevent Clara from recognizing me. To the minister I had only to say, that, though I had hitherto talked of a friend, I myself was the happy man. My first name was Francis as well as his ; and I had found Clara so gentle, so confiding, so flatteringly cordial in her intercourse with me, that, once within my power, and prevented from receding by shame, and a thousand contradictory feelings, I had, with the vanity of an *amoureux de seize ans*, the confidence to believe I could reconcile the fair lady to the exchange.

'There certainly never came such a thought into a madcap's brain; and, what is more extraordinary—but that you already know—it was so far successful, that the marriage ceremony was performed between us in the presence of a servant of mine, her accommodating companion, and the priest. We got into the carriage, and were a mile from the church, when my unlucky or lucky brother stopped the chaise by force—through what means he had obtained knowledge of my little trick, I never have been able to learn. Solmes has been faithful to me in too many instances, that I should suspect him in this important crisis. I jumped out of the carriage, pitched fraternity to the devil, and, betwixt desperation and something very like shame, began to cut away with a *couteau de chasse*, which I had provided in case of necessity. All was in vain—I was hustled down under the wheel of the carriage, and, the horses taking fright, it went over my body.

'Here ends my narrative ; for I neither heard nor saw more until I found myself stretched on a sick-bed many miles from the scene of action, and Solmes engaged in attending on me. In answer to my passionate inquiries, he briefly informed me that Master Francis had sent back the young lady to her own dwelling, and that she appeared to be extremely ill in consequence of the alarm she had

sustained. My own health, he assured me, was considered as very precarious, and added, that Tyrrel, who was in the same house, was in the utmost perturbation on my account. The very mention of his name brought on a crisis in which I brought up much blood; and it is singular that the physician who attended me—a grave gentleman, with a wig—considered that this was of service to me. I know it frightened me heartily, and prepared me for a visit from Master Frank, which I endured with a tameness he would not have experienced had the usual current of blood flowed in my veins. But sickness and the lancet make one very tolerant of sermonizing. At last, in consideration of being relieved from his accursed presence, and the sound of his infernally calm voice I slowly and reluctantly acquiesced in an arrangement by which he proposed that we should for ever bid adieu to each other and to Clara Mowbray. I would have hesitated at this last stipulation. "She was," I said, "my wife, and I was entitled to claim her as such."

'This drew down a shower of most moral reproaches, and an assurance that Clara disowned and detested my alliance, and that where there had been an essential error in the person, the mere ceremony could never be accounted binding by the law of any Christian country. I wonder this had not occurred to me; but my ideas of marriage were much founded on plays and novels, where such devices as I had practised are often resorted to for winding up the plot, without any hint of their illegality; besides, I had confided, as I mentioned before, a little too rashly perhaps, in my own powers of persuading so young a bride as Clara to be contented with one handsome fellow instead of another.

'Solmes took up the argument, when Francis released me by leaving the room. He spoke of my father's resentment, should this enterprise reach his ears—of the revenge of Mowbray of Saint Ronan's, whose nature was both haughty and rugged—of risk from the laws of the country, and God knows what bugbears besides, which, at a more advanced age, I would have laughed at. In a word, I sealed the capitulation, vowed perpetual absence, and banished myself, as they say in this country, forth of Scotland.

'And here, Harry, observe and respect my genius.

Every circumstance was against me in this negotiation. I had been the aggressor in the war ; I was wounded, and, it might be said, a prisoner in my antagonist's hands ; yet I could so far avail myself of Monsieur Martigny's greater eagerness for peace, that I clogged the treaty with a condition highly advantageous to myself, and equally unfavourable to him. Said Mr. Francis Martigny was to take upon himself the burden of my right honourable father's displeasure ; and our separation, which was certain to give immense offence, was to be represented as his work, not as mine. I insisted, tender-hearted, dutiful soul as I was, that I would consent to no measure which was to bring down papa's displeasure. This was a *sine qua non* in our negotiation.

'Voila ce que c'est d'avoir des talens.

' Monsieur Francis would, I suppose, have taken the world on his shoulders, to have placed an eternal separation betwixt his turtledove and the falcon who had made so bold a pounce at her. What he wrote to my father, I know not ; as for myself, in all duty, I represented the bad state of my health from an accident, and that my brother and companion having been suddenly called from me by some cause which he had not explained, I had thought it necessary to get to London for the best advice, and only waited his lordship's permission to return to the paternal mansion. This I soon received, and found, as I expected, that he was in towering wrath against my brother for his disobedience ; and, after some time, I even had reason to think (as, how could it be otherwise, Harry ?) that, on becoming better acquainted with the merits and amiable manners of his apparent heir, he lost any desire which he might formerly have entertained, of accomplishing any change in my circumstances in relation to the world. Perhaps the old peer turned a little ashamed of his own conduct, and dared not aver to the congregation of the righteous (for he became saintly in his latter days) the very pretty frolics which he seems to have been guilty of in his youth. Perhaps, also, the death of my right honourable mother operated in my favour, since, while she lived, my chance was the worse—there is no saying what a man will

do to spite his wife. Enough, he died—slept with his right honourable fathers, and I became, without opposition, Right Honourable in his stead.

'How I have borne my new honours, thou, Harry, and our merry set, know full well. Newmarket and Tattersall's may tell the rest. I think I have been as lucky as most men where luck is most prized, and so I shall say no more on that subject.

'And now, Harry, I will suppose thee in a moralizing mood; that is, I will fancy the dice have run wrong—or your double-barrel has hung fire—or a certain lady has looked cross—or any such weighty cause of gravity has occurred, and you give me the benefit of your seriousness. "My dear Etherington," say you pithily, "you are a precious fool! Here you are, stirring up a business rather scandalous in itself, and fraught with mischief to all concerned—a business which might sleep for ever, if you let it alone, but which is sure, like a sea-coal fire, to burst into a flame if you go on poking it. I would like to ask your lordship only two questions"—say you, with your usual graceful attitude of adjusting your perpendicular shirt-collar, and passing your hand over the knot of your cravat, which deserves a peculiar place in the *Tietania*—"only two questions—that is, Whether you do not repent the past, and whether you do not fear the future?" Very comprehensive queries, these of yours, Harry; for they respect both the time past and the time to come—one's whole life, in short. However, I shall endeavour to answer them as well as I may.

'Repent the past, said you? Yes, Harry, I think I do repent the past—that is, not quite in the parson's style of repentance, which resembles yours when you have a headache, but as I would repent a hand at cards which I had played on false principles. I should have begun with the young lady—availed myself in a very different manner of Monsieur Martigny's absence, and my own intimacy with her, and thus superseded him, if possible, in the damsel's affections. The scheme I adopted, though there was, I think, both boldness and dexterity in it, was that of a novice of premature genius, who could not calculate chances. So much for repentance. Do I not fear the future? Harry, I will not

cut your throat for supposing you to have put the question, but calmly assure you, that I never feared anything in my life. I was born without the sensation, I believe; at least, it is perfectly unknown to me. When I felt that cursed wheel pass across my breast, when I felt the pistol-ball benumb my arm, I felt no more agitation than at the bounce of a champagne-cork. But I would not have you think that I am fool enough to risk plague, trouble, and danger (all of which, besides considerable expense, I am now prepared to encounter), without some adequate motive,—and here it is.

'From various quarters, hints, rumours, and surmises have reached me, that an attack will be made on my rank and status in society, which can only be in behalf of this fellow Martigny (for I will not call him by his stolen name of Tyrrel). Now, this I hold to be a breach of the paction betwixt us, by which—that is, by that which I am determined to esteem its true meaning and purport—he was to leave my right honourable father and me to settle our own matters without his interference, which amounted to a virtual resignation of his rights, if the scoundrel ever had any. Can he expect I am to resign my wife, and, what is a better thing, old Scrogie Mowbray's estate of Nettlewood, to gratify the humour of a fellow who sets up claims to my title and whole property? No, by ——! If he assails me in a point so important, I will retaliate upon him in one where he will feel as keenly; and that he may depend upon. And now, methinks, you come upon me with a second edition of your grave remonstrances, about family feuds, unnatural rencontres, offence to all the feelings of all the world, *et caetera, et caetera*, which you might usher in most delectably with the old stave about brethren dwelling together in unity. I will not stop to inquire, whether all these delicate apprehensions are on account of the Earl of Etherington, his safety, and his reputation; or whether my friend Harry Jekyl be not considering how far his own interference with such a naughty business will be well taken at head-quarters; and so, without pausing on that question, I shall barely and briefly say, that you cannot be more sensible than I am of the madness of bringing matters to such an extremity—I have no such intention, I assure

you, and it is with no such purpose that I invite you here. Were I to challenge Martigny, he would refuse me the meeting; and all less ceremonious ways of arranging such an affair are quite old-fashioned.

'It is true, at our first meeting, I was betrayed into the scrape I told you of—just as you may have shot (or shot *at*, for I think you are no down-right hitter) a hen-pheasant, when flushed within distance, by a sort of instinctive movement, without reflecting on the enormity you were about to commit. The truth is, there is an *ignis fatuus* influence, which seems to govern our house—it poured its wildfire through my father's veins—it has descended to me in full vigour, and every now and then its impulse is irresistible. There was my enemy, and here were my pistols, was all I had time to think about the matter. But I will be on my guard in future, the more surely, as I cannot receive any provocation from him; on the contrary, if I must confess the truth, though I was willing to gloss it a little in my first account of the matter (like the *Gazette*, when recording a defeat), I am certain he would never voluntarily have fired at me, and that his pistol went off as he fell. You know me well enough to be assured, that I will never be again in the scrape of attacking an unresisting antagonist, were he ten times my brother.

'Then, as to this long tirade about hating my brother—Harry, I do not hate him more than the first-born of Egypt are in general hated by those whom they exclude from entailed estates, and so forth—not one landed man in twenty of us that is not hated by his younger brothers, to the extent of wishing him quiet in his grave, as an abominable stumbling-block in their path of life; and so far only do I hate Monsieur Martigny. But for the rest, I rather like him as otherwise; and would he but die, would give my frank consent to his being canonized; and while he lives, I am not desirous that he should be exposed to any temptation from rank and riches, those main obstacles to the self-denying course of life by which the odour of sanctity is attained.

'Here again you break in with your impertinent queries —If I have no purpose of quarrelling personally with Martigny, why do I come into collision with him at all?—

why not abide by the treaty of Marchthorn, and remain in England, without again approaching Saint Ronan's, or claiming my maiden bride ?

'Have I not told you I want him to cease all threatened attempts upon my fortune and dignity ? Have I not told you that I want to claim my wife, Clara Mowbray, and my estate of Nettlewood, fairly won by marrying her ? And, to let you into the whole secret, though Clara is a very pretty woman, yet she goes for so little in the transaction with me, her unimpassioned bridegroom, that I hope to make some relaxation of my rights over her the means of obtaining the concessions which I think most important.

'I will not deny that an aversion to awakening bustle, and encountering reproach, has made me so slow in looking after my interest, that the period will shortly expire within which I ought, by old Scrog Mowbray's will, to qualify myself for becoming his heir by being the accepted husband of Miss Mowbray of Saint Ronan's. Time was—time is—and, if I catch it not by the forelock as it passes, time will be no more—Nettlewood will be forfeited—and if I have in addition a lawsuit for my title, and for Oakendale, I run a risk of being altogether capotted. I must, therefore, act at all risks, and act with vigour—and this is the general plan of my campaign, subject always to be altered according to circumstances. I have obtained—I may say purchased—Mowbray's consent to address his sister. I have this advantage, that if she agrees to take me, she will for ever put a stop to all disagreeable reports and recollections founded on her former conduct. In that case I secure the Nettlewood property, and am ready to wage war for my paternal estate. Indeed, I firmly believe that should this happy consummation take place, Monsieur Martigny will be too much heart-broken to make further fight, but will e'en throw helve after hatchet, and run to hide himself, after the fashion of a true lover, in some desert beyond seas.

'But, supposing the lady has the bad taste to be obstinate, and will none of me, I still think that her happiness, or her peace of mind, will be as dear to Martigny as Gibraltar is to the Spaniards, and that he will sacrifice a great deal to induce me to give up my pretensions. Now, I shall want

some one to act as my agent in communicating with this fellow ; for I will not deny that my old appetite for cutting his throat may awaken suddenly, were I to hold personal intercourse with him. Come thou, therefore, without delay, and hold my back-hand—Come, for you know me, and that I never left a kindness unrewarded. To be specific, you shall have means to pay off a certain inconvenient mortgage, without troubling the tribe of Issachar, if you will but be true to me in this matter—Come, therefore, without further apologies or further delay. There shall, I give you my word, neither be risk or offence in the part of the drama which I intend to commit to your charge.

'Talking of the drama, we had a miserable attempt at a sort of bastard theatricals at Mowbray's rat-gnawed mansion. There were two things worth noticing—One, that I lost all the courage on which I pique myself, and fairly fled from the pit, rather than present myself before Miss Clara Mowbray, when it came to the push. And upon this I pray you to remark, that I am a person of singular delicacy and modesty, instead of being the Drawcansir and Daredevil that you would make of me. The other memorable is of a more delicate nature, respecting the conduct of a certain fair lady, who seemed determined to fling herself at my head. There is a wonderful degree of free-masonry among us folk of spirit ; and it is astonishing how soon we can place ourselves on a footing with neglected wives and discontented daughters. If you come not soon, one of the rewards held out to you in my former letter, will certainly not be forthcoming. No schoolboy keeps gingerbread for his comrade, without feeling a desire to nibble at it ; so, if you appear not to look after your own interest, say you had fair warning. For my own part, I am rather embarrassed than gratified by the prospect of such an affair, when I have on the *tapis* another of a different nature. This enigma I will explain at meeting.

'Thus finishes my long communication. If my motives of action do not appear explicit, think in what a maze fortune has involved me, and how much must necessarily depend on the chapter of accidents.

'Yesterday I may be said to have opened my siege, for I presented myself before Clara. I had no very flattering

reception—that was of little consequence, for I did not expect one. By alarming her fears, I made an impression thus far, that she acquiesces in my appearing before her as her brother's guest, and this is no small point gained. She will become accustomed to look on me, and will remember with less bitterness the trick which I played her formerly ; while I, on the other hand, by a similar force of habit, will get over certain awkward feelings with which I have been compunctiously visited whenever I look upon her. Adieu ! Health and brotherhood.

'Thine,

'ETHERINGTON'

CHAPTER XXVII

THE REPLY

Thou bear'st a precious burden, gentle post,
Nitre and sulphur—See that it explode not.

Old Play.

'I HAVE received your two long letters, my dear Etherington, with equal surprise and interest ; for what I knew of your Scottish adventures before, was by no means sufficient to prepare me for a statement so perversely complicated. The *ignis fatuus* which, you say, governed your father, seems to have ruled the fortunes of your whole house, there is so much eccentricity in all that you have told me. But *n'importe*, Etherington, you were my friend—you held me up when I was completely broken down ; and, whatever you may think, my services are at your command, much more from reflections on the past, than hopes for the future. I am no speech-maker, but this you may rely on while I continue to be Harry Jekyl. You have deserved some love at my hands, Etherington, and you have it.

'Perhaps I love you the better since your perplexities have become known to me ; for, my dear Etherington, you were before too much an object of envy to be entirely an object of affection. What a happy fellow ! was the song of all who named your rank, and a fortune to maintain it—luck sufficient to repair all the waste that you could make

in your income, and skill to back that luck, or supply it, should it for a moment fail you. The cards turning up as if to your wish—the dice rolling, it almost seemed, at your wink—it was rather your look than the touch of your cue that sent the ball into the pocket. You seemed to have fortune in chains, and a man of less honour would have been almost suspected of helping his luck by a little art. You won every bet ; and the instant that you were interested, one might have named the winning horse—it was always that which you were to gain most by. You never held out your piece but the game went down—and then the women !—with face, manners, person, and, above all, your tongue—what wild work have you made among them ! Good heaven ! and have you had the old sword hanging over your head by a horsehair all this while ? Has your rank been doubtful ? Your fortune unsettled ? And your luck, so constant in everything else, has that, as well as your predominant influence with the women, failed you when you wished to form a connexion for life, and when the care of your fortune required you to do so ? Etherington, I am astonished ! The Mowbray scrape I always thought an inconvenient one, as well as the quarrel with this same Tyrrel, or Martigny ; but I was far from guessing the complicated nature of your perplexities.

'But I must not run on in a manner which, though it relieves my own marvelling mind, cannot be very pleasant to you. Enough, I look on my obligations to you as more light to be borne, now I have some chance of repaying them to a certain extent ; but, even were the full debt paid, I would remain as much attached to you as ever. It is your friend who speaks, Etherington ; and, if he offers his advice in somewhat plain language, do not, I entreat you, suppose that your confidence has encouraged an offensive familiarity, but consider me as one who, in a weighty matter, writes plainly, to avoid the least chance of misconstruction.

'Etherington, your conduct hitherto has resembled anything rather than the coolness and judgement which are so peculiarly your own when you choose to display them. I pass over the masquerade of your marriage—it was a boy's trick, which could hardly have availed you

much, even if successful ; for what sort of a wife would you have acquired, had this same Clara Mowbray proved willing to have accepted the change which you had put upon her, and transferred herself, without repugnance, from one bridegroom to another ? Poor as I am, I know that neither Nettlewood nor Oakendale should have bribed me to marry such a ——. I cannot decorously fill up the blank.

'Neither, my dear Etherington, can I forgive you the trick you put on the clergyman, in whose eyes you destroyed the poor girl's character to induce him to consent to perform the ceremony, and have thereby perhaps fixed an indelible stain on her for life—this was not a fair *ruse de guerre*. As it is, you have taken little by your stratagem —unless, indeed, it should be difficult for the young lady to prove the imposition put upon her—for that being admitted, the marriage certainly goes for nothing. At least, the only use you can make of it, would be to drive her into a more formal union, for fear of having this whole unpleasant discussion brought into a court of law ; and in this, with all the advantages you possess, joined to your own arts of persuasion, and her brother's influence, I should think you very likely to succeed. All women are necessarily the slaves of their reputation. I have known some who have given up their virtue to preserve their character, which is, after all, only the shadow of it. I therefore would not conceive it difficult for Clara Mowbray to persuade herself to become a countess, rather than be the topic of conversation for all Britain, while a lawsuit betwixt you is in dependence ; and that may be for the greater part of both your lives.

'But, in Miss Mowbray's state of mind, it may require time to bring her to such a conclusion ; and I fear you will be thwarted in your operations by your rival—I will not offend you by calling him your brother. Now, it is here that I think with pleasure I may be of some use to you,—under this special condition, that there shall be no thoughts of further violence taking place between you. However you may have smoothed over your rencontre to yourself, there is no doubt that the public would have regarded any accident which might have befallen on that occasion as a crime of the deepest dye, and that the law would have

followed it with the most severe punishment. And for all that I have said of my serviceable disposition, I would fain stop short on this side of the gallows—my neck is too long already. Without a jest, Etherington, you must be ruled by counsel in this matter. I detect your hatred to this man in every line of your letter, even when you write with the greatest coolness; even where there is an affectation of gaiety, I read your sentiments on this subject; and they are such as—I will not preach to you—I will not say a good man—but such as every wise man—every man who wishes to live on fair terms with the world, and to escape general malediction, and perhaps a violent death, where all men will clap their hands and rejoice at the punishment of the fratricide—would, with all possible speed, eradicate from his breast. My services, therefore, if they are worth your acceptance, are offered, on the condition that this unholy hatred be subdued with the utmost force of your powerful mind, and that you avoid everything which can possibly lead to such a catastrophe as you have twice narrowly escaped. I do not ask you to like this man, for I know well the deep root which your prejudices hold in your mind; I merely ask you to avoid him, and to think of him as one who, if you do meet him, can never be the object of personal resentment.

'On these conditions, I will instantly join you at your spa, and wait but your answer to throw myself into the post-chaise. I will seek out this Martigny for you, and I have the vanity to think I shall be able to persuade him to take the course which his own true interest, as well as yours, so plainly points out—and that is, to depart and make us free of him. You must not grudge a round sum of money, should that prove necessary—we must make wings for him to fly with, and I must be empowered by you to that purpose. I cannot think you have anything serious to fear from a lawsuit. Your father threw out this sinister hint at a moment when he was enraged at his wife, and irritated by his son; and I have little doubt that his expressions were merely flashes of anger at the moment, though I see they have made a deep impression on you. At all events, he spoke of a preference to his illegitimate son, as something which it was in his own power to give or to

withhold; and he has died without bestowing it. The family seem addicted to irregular matrimony, and some left-handed marriage there may have been used to propitiate the modesty, and save the conscience, of the French lady; but that anything of the nature of a serious and legal ceremony took place, nothing but the strongest proof can make me believe.

'I repeat, then, that I have little doubt that the claims of Martigny, whatever they are, may be easily compounded, and England made clear of him. This will be more easily done, if he really entertains such a romantic passion, as you describe, for Miss Clara Mowbray. It would be easy to show him that, whether she is disposed to accept your lordship's hand or not, her quiet and peace of mind must depend on his leaving the country. Rely on it, I shall find out the way to smooth him down, and whether distance or the grave divide Martigny and you, is very little to the purpose, unless in so far as the one point can be attained with honour and safety, and the other, if attempted, would only make all concerned the subject of general execration and deserved punishment. Speak the word, and I attend you, as your truly grateful and devoted

'HENRY JEKYL.'

To this admonitory epistle, the writer received, in the course of post, the following answer:—

'My truly grateful and devoted Henry Jekyl has adopted a tone which seems to be exalted without any occasion. Why, thou suspicious monitor, have I not repeated a hundred times that I repent sincerely of the foolish rencontre, and am determined to curb my temper, and be on my guard in future. And what need you come upon me, with your long lesson about execration, and punishment, and fratricide, and so forth? You deal with an argument as a boy does with the first hare he shoots, which he never thinks dead till he has fired the second barrel into her. What a fellow you would have been for a lawyer! how long you would have held forth upon the plainest cause, until the poor bothered judge was almost willing to decide against justice, that he might be revenged on you. If I must repeat what I have said twenty times,

I tell you I have no thoughts of proceeding with this fellow as I would with another. If my father's blood be in his veins, it shall save the skin his mother gave him. And so come, without more parade, either of stipulation or argument. Thou art, indeed, a curious animal! One would think, to read your communication, that you had yourself discovered the propriety of acting as a negotiator, and the reasons which might, in the course of such a treaty, be urged with advantage to induce this fellow to leave the country. Why, this is the very course chalked out in my last letter! You are bolder than the boldest gipsy, for you not only steal my ideas, and disfigure them, that they may pass for yours, but you have the assurance to come a-begging with them to the door of the original parent! No man like you for stealing other men's inventions, and cooking them up in your own way. However, Harry, bating a little self-conceit and assumption, thou art as honest a fellow as ever man put faith in—clever, too, in your own style, though not quite the genius you would fain pass for. Come on thine own terms, and come as speedily as thou canst. I do not reckon the promise I made the less binding, that you very generously make no allusion to it.

'Thine,

'ETHERINGTON.

'PS. One single caution I must add—do not mention my name to any one at Harrogate, or your prospect of meeting me, or the route which you are about to take. On the purpose of your journey it is unnecessary to recommend silence. I know not whether such doubts are natural to all who have secret measures to pursue, or whether nature has given me an unusual share of anxious suspicion; but I cannot divest myself of the idea, that I am closely watched by some one whom I cannot discover. Although I concealed my purpose of coming hither from all mankind but you, whom I do not for an instant suspect of babbling, yet it was known to this Martigny, and he is down here before me. Again, I said not a word—gave not a hint to any one of my views towards Clara, yet the tattling people here had spread a report of a marriage depending between us, even before I could make the motion to her brother. To

be sure, in such society there is nothing talked of but marrying and giving in marriage ; and this, which alarms me, as connected with my own private purposes, may be a bare rumour, arising out of the gossip of the place. Yet I feel like the poor woman in the old story, who felt herself watched by an eye that glared upon her from behind the tapestry.

'I should have told you in my last, that I had been recognized at a public entertainment by the old clergyman who pronounced the matrimonial blessing on Clara and me, nearly eight years ago. He insisted upon addressing me by the name of Valentine Bulmer, under which I was then best known. It did not suit me at present to put him into my confidence, so I cut him, Harry, as I would an old pencil. The task was the less difficult, that I had to do with one of the most absent men that ever dreamed with his eyes open. I verily believe he might be persuaded that the whole transaction was a vision, and that he had never in reality seen me before. Your pious rebuke, therefore, about what I told him formerly concerning the lovers, is quite thrown away. After all, if what I said was not accurately true, as I certainly believe it was an exaggeration, it was all St. Francis of Martigny's fault, I suppose. I am sure he had love and opportunity on his side.

'Here you have a postscript, Harry, longer than the letter, but it must conclude with the same burden—Come, and come quickly.'

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FRIGHT

As shakes the bough of trembling leaf,
When sudden whirlwinds rise ;
As stands aghast the warrior chief,
When his base army flies.

. . . . . .

It had been settled by all who took the matter into consideration, that the fidgety, fiery old nabob would soon quarrel with his landlady, Mrs. Dods, and become impatient of his residence at Saint Ronan's. A man so kind to himself, and so inquisitive about the affairs of others, could have,

it was supposed, a limited sphere for gratification either of his tastes or of his curiosity, in the Aultoun of Saint Ronan's; and many a time the precise day and hour of his departure were fixed by the idlers at the spa. But still old Touchwood appeared amongst them when the weather permitted, with his nut-brown visage, his throat carefully wrapped up in an immense Indian kerchief, and his gold-headed cane, which he never failed to carry over his shoulder; his short, but stout limbs, and his active step, showed plainly that he bore it rather as a badge of dignity than a means of support. There he stood, answering shortly and gruffly to all questions proposed to him, and making his remarks aloud upon the company, with great indifference as to the offence which might be taken; and as soon as the ancient priestess had handed him his glass of the salutiferous water, turned on his heel with a brief good-morning, and either marched back to hide himself in the manse, with his crony, Mr. Cargill, or to engage in some hobbyhorsical pursuit connected with his neighbours in the Aultoun.

The truth was, that the honest gentleman having, so far as Mrs. Dods would permit, put matters to rights within her residence, wisely abstained from pushing his innovations any further, aware that it is not every stone which is capable of receiving the last degree of polish. He next set himself about putting Mr. Cargill's house into order; and without leave asked or given by that reverend gentleman, he actually accomplished as wonderful a reformation in the manse as could have been effected by a benevolent brownie. The floors were sometimes swept—the carpets were sometimes shaken—the plates and dishes were cleaner—there was tea and sugar in the tea-chest, and a joint of meat at proper times was to be found in the larder, The elder maid-servant wore a good stuff gown—the younger snooded up her hair, and now went about the house a damsel so trig and neat, that some said she was too handsome for the service of a bachelor divine; and others, that they saw no business so old a fool as the nabob had to be meddling with the lassie's busking. But for such evil bruits Mr. Touchwood cared not, even if he happened to hear of them, which was very doubtful. Add to all these changes, that the garden was weeded, and the glebe was regularly laboured.

The talisman by which all this desirable alteration was wrought, consisted partly in small presents, partly in constant attention. The liberality of the singular old gentleman gave him a perfect right to scold when he saw things wrong: the domestics, who had fallen into total sloth and indifference, began to exert themselves under Mr. Touchwood's new system of rewards and surveillance; and the minister, half unconscious of the cause, reaped the advantage of the exertions of his busy friend. Sometimes he lifted his head when he heard workmen thumping and bouncing in the neighbourhood of his study, and demanded the meaning of the clatter which annoyed him; but on receiving for answer that it was by order of Mr. Touchwood, he resumed his labours, under the persuasion that all was well.

But even the Augean task of putting the manse in order, did not satisfy the gigantic activity of Mr. Touchwood. He aspired to universal dominion in the Aultoun of Saint Ronan's; and, like most men of an ardent temper, he contrived, in a great measure, to possess himself of the authority he longed after. Then was there war waged by him with all the petty but perpetual nuisances which infest a Scottish town of the old stamp—then was the hereditary dunghill, which had reeked before the window of the cottage for fourscore years, transported behind the house—then was the broken wheelbarrow, or unserviceable cart, removed out of the footpath—the old hat, or blue petticoat, taken from the window into which it had been stuffed, 'to expel the winter's flaw,' was consigned to the gutter, and its place supplied by good perspicuous glass. The means by which such reformation was effected were the same as resorted to in the manse—money and admonition. The latter given alone would have met little attention—perhaps would have provoked opposition—but, softened and sweetened by a little present to assist the reform recommended, it sank into the hearts of the hearers, and in general overcame their objections. Besides, an opinion of the nabob's wealth was high among the villagers; and an idea prevailed amongst them that, notwithstanding his keeping no servants or equipage, he was able to purchase, if he pleased, half the land in the country. It was not

grand carriages and fine liveries that made heavy purses; they rather helped to lighten them; and they said, who pretended to know what they were talking about, that old Turnpenny, and Mr. Bindloose to boot, would tell down more money on Mr. Touchwood's mere word, than upon the joint bond of half the fine folks at the Well. Such an opinion smoothed everything before the path of one who showed himself neither averse to give nor to lend; and it by no means diminished the reputation of his wealth, that in transactions of business he was not carelessly negligent of his interest, but plainly showed he understood the value of what he was parting with. Few, therefore, cared to withstand the humours of a whimsical old gentleman who had both the will and the means of obliging those disposed to comply with his fancies; and thus the singular stranger contrived, in the course of a brief space of days or weeks, to place the villagers more absolutely at his devotion than they had been to the pleasure of any individual since their ancient lords had left the Aultoun. The power of the baron-bailie himself, though the office was vested in the person of old Meiklewham, was a subordinate jurisdiction, compared to the voluntary allegiance which the inhabitants paid to Mr. Touchwood.

There were, however, recusants, who declined the authority thus set up amongst them, and, with the characteristic obstinacy of their countrymen, refused to hearken to the words of the stranger, whether they were for good or for evil. These men's dunghills were not removed, nor the stumbling-blocks taken from the footpath, where it passed the front of their houses. And it befell, that while Mr. Touchwood was most eager in abating the nuisances of the village, he had very nearly experienced a frequent fate of great reformers—that of losing his life by means of one of those enormities which as yet had subsisted in spite of all his efforts.

The nabob finding his time after dinner hang somewhat heavy on his hand, and the moon being tolerably bright, had, one harvest evening, sought his usual remedy for dispelling ennui by a walk to the manse, where he was sure that, if he could not succeed in engaging the minister himself in some disputation, he would at least find some-

thing in the establishment to animadvert upon and to restore to order.

Accordingly, he had taken the opportunity to lecture the younger of the minister's lasses upon the duty of wearing shoes and stockings; and, as his advice came fortified by a present of six pair of white cotton hose, and two pair of stout leathern shoes, it was received, not with respect only, but with gratitude, and the chuck under the chin that rounded up the oration, while she opened the outer door for his honour, was acknowledged with a blush and a giggle. Nay, so far did Grizzy carry her sense of Mr. Touchwood's kindness, that, observing the moon was behind a cloud, she very carefully offered to escort him to the Cleikum Inn with a lantern, in case he should come to some harm by the gate. This the traveller's independent spirit scorned to listen to; and, having assured her that he had walked the streets of Paris and of Madrid whole nights without such an accommodation, he stoutly strode off on his return to his lodgings.

An accident, however, befell him, which, unless the police of Madrid and Paris be belied, might have happened in either of those two splendid capitals, as well as in the miserable Aultoun of Saint Ronan's. Before the door of Saunders Jaup, a feuar of some importance, 'who held his land free, and caredna a bodle for ony ane,' yawned that odoriferous gulf, ycleped, in Scottish phrase, the jaw-hole—in other words, an uncovered common sewer. The local situation of this receptacle of filth was well known to Mr. Touchwood; for Saunders Jaup was at the very head of those who held out for the practices of their fathers, and still maintained those ancient and unsavoury customs which our traveller had in so many instances succeeded in abating. Guided, therefore, by his nose, the nabob made a considerable circuit to avoid the displeasure and danger of passing this filthy puddle at the nearest, and by that means fell upon Scylla as he sought to avoid Charybdis. In plain language, he approached so near the bank of a little rivulet, which in that place passed betwixt the footpath and the horse-road, that he lost his footing, and fell into the channel of the streamlet from a height of three or four feet. It was thought that the noise of his fall, or at least

his call for assistance, must have been heard in the house of Saunders Jaup ; but that honest person was, according to his own account, at that time engaged in the exercise of the evening—an excuse which passed current, although Saunders was privately heard to allege that the town would have been the quieter 'if the auld meddling busybody had bidden still in the burn for gude and a'.'

But fortune had provided better for poor Touchwood, whose foibles, as they arose out of the most excellent motives, would have ill deserved so severe a fate. A passenger, who heard him shout for help, ventured cautiously to the side of the bank, down which he had fallen ; and, after ascertaining the nature of the ground as carefully as the darkness permitted, was at length, and not without some effort, enabled to assist him out of the channel of the rivulet.

'Are you hurt materially ?' said this good Samaritan to the object of his care.

'No—no—d—n it—no,' said Touchwood, extremely angry at his disaster, and the cause of it. 'Do you think I, who have been at the summit of Mount Athos, where the precipice sinks a thousand feet on the sea, care a farthing about such a fall as this is ?'

But, as he spoke, he reeled, and his kind assistant caught him by the arm to prevent his falling.

'I fear you are more hurt than you suppose, sir,' said the stranger ; 'permit me to go home along with you.'

'With all my heart,' said Touchwood ; 'for, though it is impossible I can need help in such a foolish matter, yet I am equally obliged to you, friend ; and if the Cleikum Inn be not out of your road, I will take your arm so far, and thank you to the boot.'

'It is much at your service, sir,' said the stranger ; 'indeed, I was thinking to lodge there for the night.'

'I am glad to hear it,' resumed Touchwood ; 'you shall be my guest, and I will make them look after you in proper fashion. You seem to be a very civil sort of fellow, and I do not find your arm inconvenient—it is the rheumatism makes me walk so ill—the pest of all that have been in hot climates when they settle among these d—d fogs.'

'Lean as hard and walk as slow as you will, sir,' said the benevolent assistant ; 'this is a rough street.'

'Yes, sir—and why is it rough?' answered Touchwood. 'Why, because the old pig-headed fool, Saunders Jaup, will not allow it to be made smooth. There he sits, sir, and obstructs all rational improvement; and, if a man would not fall into his infernal putrid gutter, and so become an abomination unto himself and odious to others, for his whole life to come, he runs the risk of breaking his neck, as I have done to-night.'

'I am afraid, sir,' said his companion, 'you have fallen on the most dangerous side. You remember Swift's proverb, "The more dirt, the less hurt."'

'But why should there be either dirt or hurt in a well-regulated place?' answered Touchwood. 'Why should not men be able to go about their affairs at night, in such a hamlet as this, without either endangering necks or noses? Our Scottish magistrates are worth nothing, sir, nothing at all. Oh, for a Turkish cadi, now, to trounce the scoundrel—or the Mayor of Calcutta, to bring him into his court—or were it but an English Justice of the Peace that is newly included in the commission—they would abate the villain's nuisance with a vengeance on him. But here we are—this is the Cleikum Inn. Hallo, hilloa, house! Eppie Anderson! Beenie Chambermaid! boy Boots! Mrs. Dods!—are you all of you asleep and dead? Here have I been half murdered, and you let me stand bawling at the door!'

Eppie Anderson came with a light, and so did Beenie Chambermaid with another; but no sooner did they look upon the pair who stood in the porch under the huge sign that swung to and fro with heavy creaking, than Beenie screamed, flung away her candle, though a four in the pound, and in a newly japanned candlestick, and fled one way, while Eppie Anderson, echoing the yell, brandished her light round her head like a Bacchante flourishing her torch, and ran off in another direction.

'Aye, I must be a bloody spectacle,' said Mr. Touchwood, letting himself fall heavily upon his assistant's shoulder, and wiping his face, which trickled with wet: 'I did not think I had been so seriously hurt; but I find my weakness now—I must have lost much blood.'

'I hope you are still mistaken,' said the stranger; 'but

here lies the way to the kitchen—we shall find light there, since no one chooses to bring it to us.'

He assisted the old gentleman into the kitchen, where a lamp, as well as a bright fire, was burning, by the light of which he could easily discern that the supposed blood was only water of the rivulet, and, indeed, none of the cleanest, although much more so than the sufferer would have found it a little lower, where the stream is joined by the superfluities of Saunders Jaup's palladium. Relieved by his new friend's repeated assurances that such was the case, the senior began to bustle up a little, and his companion, desirous to render him every assistance, went to the door of the kitchen to call for a basin and water. Just as he was about to open the door, the voice of Mrs. Dods was heard as she descended the stairs, in a tone of indignation by no means unusual to her, yet mingled at the same time with a few notes that sounded like unto the quiverings of consternation. . . . .

'Idle limmers—silly sluts—I'll warrant nane o' ye will ever see onything waur than yoursell, ye silly taupies. Ghaist, indeed! I'll warrant it 's some idle dub-skelper frae the Waal, coming after some o' yoursells on nae honest errand. Ghaist, indeed! Haud up the candle, John Ostler. I'se warrant it a twa-handed ghaist, and the door left on the sneck. There 's somebody in the kitchen—gang forward wi' the lantern, John Ostler.'

At this critical moment the stranger opened the door of the kitchen, and beheld the dame advancing at the head of her household troops. The ostler and humpbacked postilion, one bearing a stable-lantern and a hayfork, the other a rushlight and a broom, constituted the advanced guard; Mrs. Dods herself formed the centre, talking loud and brandishing a pair of tongs; while the two maids, like troops not much to be trusted after their recent defeat, followed, cowering in the rear. But notwithstanding this admirable disposition, no sooner had the stranger shown his face, and pronounced the words 'Mrs. Dods', than a panic seized the whole array. The advanced guard recoiled in consternation, the ostler upsetting Mrs. Dods in the confusion of his retreat; while she, grappling with him in her terror, secured him by the ears and hair, and they joined

their cries together in hideous chorus. The two maidens resumed their former flight, and took refuge in the darksome den entitled their bedroom, while the humpbacked postilion fled like the wind into the stable, and, with

THE FRIGHT.—TYRREL'S RE-APPEARANCE AT THE CLEIKUM INN.

professional instinct, began in the extremity of his terror to saddle a horse.

Meanwhile, the guest whose appearance had caused this combustion, plucked the roaring ostler from above Mrs. Dods, and pushing him away with a hearty slap on

the shoulder, proceeded to raise and encourage the fallen landlady, inquiring, at the same time, 'What, in the devil's name, was the cause of all this senseless confusion?'

'And what is the reason, in Heaven's name,' answered the matron, keeping her eyes firmly shut, and still shrewish in her expostulation, though in the very extremity of terror, 'what is the reason that you should come and frighten a decent house, where you met naething but the height of civility?'

'And why should I frighten you, Mrs. Dods, or in one word, what is the meaning of all this nonsensical terror?'

'Are not you,' said Mrs. Dods, opening her eyes a little as she spoke, 'the ghaist of Francis Tirl?'

'I am Francis Tyrrel, unquestionably, my old friend.'

'I kend it! I kend it!' answered the honest woman, relapsing into her agony; 'and I think ye might be ashamed of yoursell, that are a ghaist, and have nae better to do than to frighten a puir auld alewife.'

'On my word, I am no ghost, but a living man,' answered Tyrrel.

'Were you not murdered, than?' said Mrs. Dods, still in an uncertain voice, and only partially opening her eyes—'Are ye very sure ye werena murdered?'

'Why, not that ever I heard of, certainly, dame,' replied Tyrrel.

'But *I* shall be murdered presently,' said old Touchwood from the kitchen, where he had hitherto remained a mute auditor of this extraordinary scene. '*I* shall be murdered, unless you fetch me some water without delay.'

'Coming, sir, coming,' answered Dame Dods, her professional reply being as familiar to her as that of poor Francis's 'Anon, anon, sir.' 'As I live by honest reckonings,' said she, fully collecting herself, and giving a glance of more composed temper at Tyrrel, 'I believe it *is* yoursell, Maister Frank, in blood and body after a'—and see if I dinna gie a proper sorting to yon twa silly jauds that gard me mak a bogle of you, and a fule of mysell. Ghaist! my certie, I sall ghaist them: if they had their heads as muckle on their wark as on their daffing, they wad play nae sic pliskies; it 's the wanton steed that scaurs at the windlestrae. Ghaist! wha e'er heard of ghaists in an honest

house? Naebody need fear bogles that has a conscience void of offence. But I am blithe that MacTurk hasna murdered ye when a' is dune, Maister Francie.'

'Come this way, Mother Dods, if you would not have me do a mischief!' exclaimed Touchwood, grasping a plate which stood on the dresser, as if he were about to heave it at the landlady by way of recalling her attention.

'For the love of Heaven, dinna break it!' exclaimed the alarmed landlady, knowing that Touchwood's effervescence of impatience sometimes expended itself at the expense of her crockery, though it was afterwards liberally atoned for. 'Lord, sir, are ye out of your wits!—it breaks a set, ye ken. Godsake, put doun the cheeny plate, and try your hand on the delf-ware!—it will just make as good a jingle. But, Lord haud a grip o' us! now I look at ye, what can hae come ower ye, and what sort of a plight are ye in? Wait till I fetch water and a towel.'

In fact, the miserable guise of her new lodger now overcame the dame's curiosity to inquire after the fate of her earlier acquaintance, and she gave her instant and exclusive attention to Mr. Touchwood, with many exclamations, while aiding him to perform the task of ablution and abstersion. Her two fugitive handmaidens had by this time returned to the kitchen, and endeavoured to suppress a smuggled laugh at the recollection of their mistress's panic, by acting very officiously in Mr. Touchwood's service. By dint of washing and drying, the token of the sable stains was at length removed, and the veteran became, with some difficulty, satisfied that he had been more dirtied and frightened than hurt.

Tyrrel, in the meantime, stood looking on with wonder, imagining that he beheld in the features which emerged from a mask of mud, the countenance of an old friend. After the operation was ended, he could not help addressing himself to Mr. Touchwood, to demand whether he had not the pleasure to see a friend to whom he had been obliged, when at Smyrna, for some kindness respecting his money matters?

'Not worth speaking of—not worth speaking of,' said Touchwood hastily. 'Glad to see you, though—glad to see you. Yes, here I am; you will find me the same good-

natured old fool that I was at Smyrna—never look how I am to get in money again—always laying it out. Never mind, it was written in my forehead, as the Turk says. I will go up now and change my dress; you will sup with me when I come back. Mrs. Dods will toss us up something—a brandered fowl will be best, Mrs. Dods, with some mushrooms, and get us a jug of mulled wine—plottie, as you call it—to put the recollection of the old Presbyterian's common sewer out of my head.'

So saying, upstairs marched the traveller to his own apartment, while Tyrrel, seizing upon a candle, was about to do the same.

'Mr. Touchwood is in the blue room, Mrs. Dods; I suppose I may take possession of the yellow one?'

'Suppose naething about the matter, Maister Francie Tirl, till ye tell me downright where ye hae been a' this time, and whether ye hae been murdered or no?'

'I think you may be pretty well satisfied of that, Mrs. Dods?'

'Troth! and so I am in a sense; and yet it gars me grue to look upon ye, sae mony days and weeks it has been since I thought ye were rotten in the moulds. And now to see ye standing before me hale and feir, and crying for a bedroom like ither folk!'

'One would almost suppose, my good friend,' said Tyrrel, 'that you were sorry at my having come alive again.'

'It 's no for that,' replied Mrs. Dods, who was peculiarly ingenious in the mode of framing and stating what she conceived to be her grievances; 'but is it not a queer thing for a decent man like yoursell, Maister Tirl, to be leaving your lodgings without a word spoken, and me put to a' these charges in seeking for your dead body, and very near taking my business out of honest Maister Bindloose's hands, because he kend the cantrips of the like of you better than I did?—and than they hae putten up an advertisement down at the Waal yonder, wi' a' their names at it, setting ye forth, Maister Francie, as ane of the greatest blackguards unhanged; and wha, div ye think, is to keep ye in a creditable house, if that 's the character ye get?'

'You may leave that to me, Mrs. Dods—I assure you that matter shall be put to rights to your satisfaction;

and I think, so long as we have known each other, you may take my word that I am not undeserving the shelter of your roof for a single night (I shall ask it no longer), until my character is sufficiently cleared. It was for that purpose I chiefly came back again.'

'Came back again!' said Mrs. Dods. 'I profess ye made me start, Maister Tirl, and you looking sae pale, too. But I think,' she added, straining after a joke, 'if ye were a ghaist, seeing we are such auld acquaintance, ye wadna wish to spoil my custom, but would just walk decently up and down the auld castle wa's, or maybe down at the kirk yonder—there have been awfu' things dune in that kirk and kirkyard—I whiles dinna like to look that way, Maister Francie.'

'I am much of your mind, mistress,' said Tyrrel, with a sigh; 'and, indeed, I do in one sense resemble the apparitions you talk of; for, like them, and to as little purpose, I stalk about scenes where my happiness departed. But I speak riddles to you, Mrs. Dods—the plain truth is, that I met with an accident on the day I last left your house, the effects of which detained me at some distance from Saint Ronan's till this very day.'

'Hegh, sirs, and ye were sparing of your trouble, that wadna write a bit line, or send a bit message! Ye might hae thought folk wad hae been vexed eneugh about ye, forby undertaking journeys, and hiring folk to seek for your dead body.'

'I shall willingly pay all reasonable charges which my disappearance may have occasioned,' answered her guest; 'and I assure you, once for all, that my remaining for some time quiet at Marchthorn, arose partly from illness, and partly from business of a very pressing and particular nature.'

'At Marchthorn!' exclaimed Dame Dods, 'heard ever man the like o' that! And where did ye put up in Marchthorn? an ane may mak bauld to speer.'

'At the Black Bull,' replied Tyrrel.

'Aye, that 's auld Tam Lowrie's; a very decent man, Thamas, and a douce creditable house—nane of your flisk-ma-hoys. I am glad ye made choice of sic gude quarters, neighbour; for I am beginning to think ye are

but a queer ane—ye look as if butter wadna melt in your mouth, but I sall warrant cheese no choke ye. But I'll thank ye to gang your ways into the parlour, for I am no like to get muckle mair out o' ye, it 's like; and ye are standing here just in the gate, when we hae the supper to dish.'

Tyrrel, glad to be released from the examination to which his landlady's curiosity had without ceremony subjected him, walked into the parlour, where he was presently joined by Mr. Touchwood, newly attired, and high in spirits.

'Here comes our supper!' he exclaimed. 'Sit ye down, and let us see what Mrs. Dods has done for us. I profess, mistress, your plottie is excellent, ever since I taught you to mix the spices in the right proportion.'

'I am glad the plottie pleases ye, sir, but I think I kend gay weel how to make it before I saw your honour. Maister Tirl can tell that, for mony a browst of it I hae brewed lang syne for him and the callant Valentine Bulmer.'

This ill-timed observation extorted a groan from Tyrrel; but the traveller, running on with his own recollections, did not appear to notice his emotion.

'You are a conceited old woman,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'how the devil should any one know how to mix spices so well as he who has been where they grow? I have seen the sun ripening nutmegs and cloves, and here it can hardly fill a peascod, by Jupiter! Ah, Tyrrel, the merry nights we have had at Smyrna! Gad, I think the gammon and the good wine taste all the better in a land where folks hold them to be sinful indulgence. Gad, I believe many a good Moslem is of the same opinion—that same prohibition of their prophet's gives a flavour to the ham, and a relish to the Cyprus. Do you remember old Cogia Hassein, with his green turban? I once played him a trick, and put a pint of brandy into his sherbet. Egad, the old fellow took care never to discover the cheat until he had got to the bottom of the flagon, and then he strokes his long white beard, and says, "Ullah Kerim," that is, "Heaven is merciful," Mrs. Dods, Mr. Tyrrel knows the meaning of it. Ullah Kerim, says he, after he had drunk about a gallon of brandy-punch! Ullah Kerim, says the

hypocritical old rogue, as if he had done the finest thing in the world!'

'And what for no? What for shouldna the honest man say a blessing after his drap punch?' demanded Mrs. Dods; 'it was better, I ween, than blasting, and blawing, and swearing, as if folks shouldna be thankful for the creature-comforts.'

'Well said, old Dame Dods,' replied the traveller; 'that is a right hostess's maxim, and worthy of Mrs. Quickly herself. Here is to thee, and I pray ye to pledge me before ye leave the room.'

'Troth, I'll pledge naebody the night, Maister Touchwood; for, what wi' the upcast and terror that I got a wee while syne, and what wi' the bit taste that I behoved to take of the plottie while I was making it, my head is sair eneugh distressed the night already. Maister Tirl, the yellow room is ready for ye when you like; and, gentlemen, as the morn is the Sabbath, I canna be keeping the servant queans out of their beds to wait on ye ony langer, for they will make it an excuse for lying till aught o'clock on the Lord's day. So, when your plottie is done, I'll be muckle obliged to ye to light the bedroom candles, and put out the double moulds, and e'en show yoursells to your beds; for douce folks, sic as the like of you, should set an example by ordinary. And so, gude-night to ye baith.'

'By my faith,' said Touchwood, as she withdrew, 'our dame turns as obstinate as a Pasha with three tails! We have her gracious permission to finish our mug, however; so here is to your health once more, Mr. Tyrrel, wishing you a hearty welcome to your own country.'

'I thank you, Mr. Touchwood,' answered Tyrrel; 'and I return you the same good wishes, with, as I sincerely hope, a much greater chance of their being realized. You relieved me, sir, at a time when the villany of an agent, prompted, as I have reason to think, by an active and powerful enemy, occasioned my being, for a time, pressed for funds. I made remittances to the *Ragion* you dealt with, to acquit myself at least of the pecuniary part of my obligation; but the bills were returned, because, it was stated, you had left Smyrna.'

'Very true—very true—left Smyrna, and here I am in

Scotland; as for the bills, we will speak of them another time—something due for picking me out of the gutter.'

'I shall make no deduction on that account,' said Tyrrel, smiling, though in no jocose mood; 'and I beg you not to mistake me. The circumstances of embarrassment, under which you found me at Smyrna, were merely temporary. I am most able and willing to pay my debt; and, let me add, I am most desirous to do so.'

'Another time—another time,' said Mr. Touchwood; 'time enough before us, Mr. Tyrrel—besides, at Smyrna, you talked of a lawsuit: law is a lick-penny, Mr. Tyrrel—no counsellor like the pound in purse.'

'For my lawsuit,' said Tyrrel, 'I am fully provided.'

'But have you good advice? Have you good advice?' said Touchwood; 'answer me that.'

'I have advised with my lawyers,' answered Tyrrel, internally vexed to find that his friend was much disposed to make his generosity upon the former occasion a pretext for prying further into his affairs now than he thought polite or convenient.

'With your counsel learned in the law—eh, my dear boy? But the advice you should take is of some travelled friend, well acquainted with mankind and the world—some one that has lived double your years, and is maybe looking out for some bare young fellow that he may do a little good to—one that might be willing to help you further than I can pretend to guess; for, as to your lawyer, you get just your guinea's worth from him—not even so much as the baker's bargain, thirteen to the dozen.'

'I think I should not trouble myself to go far in search of a friend such as you describe,' said Tyrrel, who could not affect to misunderstand the senior's drift, 'when I was near Mr. Peregrine Touchwood; but the truth is, my affairs are at present so much complicated with those of others, whose secrets I have no right to communicate, that I cannot have the advantage of consulting you, or any other friend. It is possible I may be soon obliged to lay aside this reserve, and vindicate myself before the whole public. I will not fail, when that time shall arrive, to take an early opportunity of confidential communication with you.'

'That is right—confidential is the word. No person ever

made a confidant of me who repented it. Think what the Pasha might have made of it, had he taken my advice, and cut through the isthmus of Suez. Turk and Christian, men of all tongues and countries, used to consult old Touchwood, from the building of a mosque down to the settling of an *agio*. But come—Good-night—good-night.'

So saying, he took up his bedroom light, and extinguished one of those which stood on the table, nodded to Tyrrel to discharge his share of the duty imposed by Mrs. Dods with the same punctuality, and they withdrew to their several apartments, entertaining very different sentiments of each other.

'A troublesome, inquisitive old gentleman,' said Tyrrel to himself; 'I remember him narrowly escaping the bastinado at Smyrna, for thrusting his advice on the Turkish cadi—and then I lie under a considerable obligation to him, giving him a sort of right to annoy me. Well, I must parry his impertinence as I can.'

'A shy cock this Frank Tyrrel,' thought the traveller; 'a very complete dodger! But no matter—I shall wind him, were he to double like a fox. I am resolved to make his matters my own, and if *I* cannot carry him through, I know not who can.'

Having formed this philanthropic resolution, Mr. Touchwood threw himself into bed, which luckily declined exactly at the right angle, and, full of self-complacency, consigned himself to slumber.

CHAPTER XXIX

MEDIATION

—— So; begone!
We will not now be troubled with reply;
We offer fair, take it advisedly.

King Henry IV, Part I.

It had been the purpose of Tyrrel, by rising and breakfasting early, to avoid again meeting Mr. Touchwood, having upon his hands a matter in which that officious gentleman's interference was likely to prove troublesome.

His character, he was aware, had been assailed at the spa in the most public manner, and in the most public manner he was resolved to demand redress, conscious that whatever other important concerns had brought him to Scotland must necessarily be postponed to the vindication of his honour. He was determined, for this purpose, to go down to the rooms when the company was assembled at the breakfast-hour, and had just taken his hat to set out, when he was interrupted by Mrs. Dods, who, announcing 'a gentleman that was speering for him', ushered into the chamber a very fashionable young man in a military surtout, covered with silk lace and fur, and wearing a foraging-cap; a dress now too familiar to be distinguished, but which at that time was used only by geniuses of a superior order. The stranger was neither handsome nor plain, but had in his appearance a good deal of pretension, and the cool easy superiority which belongs to high breeding. On his part, he surveyed Tyrrel; and, as his appearance differed, perhaps, from that for which the exterior of the Cleikum Inn had prepared him, he abated something of the air with which he had entered the room, and politely announced himself as Captain Jekyl, of the —— Guards (presenting, at the same time, his ticket).

'He presumed he spoke to Mr. Martigny?'

'To Mr. Francis Tyrrel, sir,' replied Tyrrel, drawing himself up—'Martigny was my mother's name—I have never borne it.'

'I am not here for the purpose of disputing that point, Mr. Tyrrel, though I am not entitled to admit what my principal's information leads him to doubt.'

'Your principal, I presume, is Sir Bingo Binks?' said Tyrrel. 'I have not forgotten that there is an unfortunate affair between us.'

'I have not the honour to know Sir Bingo Binks,' said Captain Jekyl. 'I come on the part of the Earl of Etherington.'

Tyrrel stood silent for a moment, and then said, 'I am at a loss to know what the gentleman who calls himself Earl of Etherington can have to say to me, through the medium of such a messenger as yourself, Captain Jekyl. I should have supposed that, considering our unhappy

relationship, and the terms on which we stand towards each other, the lawyers were the fitter negotiators between us.'

'Sir,' said Captain Jekyl, 'you are misunderstanding my errand. I am come on no message of hostile import from Lord Etherington. I am aware of the connexion betwixt you, which would render such an office altogether contradictory to common sense and the laws of nature; and I assure you, I would lay down my life rather than be concerned in an affair so unnatural. I would act, if possible, as a mediator betwixt you.'

They had hitherto remained standing. Mr. Tyrrel now offered his guest a seat; and, having assumed one himself, he broke the awkward pause which ensued by observing, 'I should be happy, after experiencing such a long course of injustice and persecution from your friend, to learn, even at this late period, Captain Jekyl, anything which can make me think better, either of him, or of his purpose towards me and towards others.'

'Mr. Tyrrel,' said Captain Jekyl, 'you must allow me to speak with candour. There is too great a stake betwixt your brother and you to permit you to be friends; but I do not see it is necessary that you should therefore be mortal enemies.'

'I am not my brother's enemy, Captain Jekyl,' said Tyrrel; 'I have never been so. His friend I cannot be, and he knows but too well the insurmountable barrier which his own conduct has placed between us.'

'I am aware,' said Captain Jekyl slowly and expressively, 'generally, at least, of the particulars of your unfortunate disagreement.'

'If so,' said Tyrrel, colouring, 'you must be also aware with what extreme pain I feel myself compelled to enter on such a subject with a total stranger—a stranger, too, the friend and confidant of one who——But I will not hurt your feelings, Captain Jekyl, but rather endeavour to suppress my own. In one word, I beg to be favoured with the import of your communication, as I am obliged to go down to the spa this morning, in order to put to rights some matters there which concern me nearly.'

'If you mean the cause of your absence from an appointment with Sir Bingo Binks,' said Captain Jekyl, 'the

matter has been already completely explained. I pulled down the offensive placard with my own hand, and rendered myself responsible for your honour to any one who should presume to hold it in future doubt.'

'Sir,' said Tyrrel, very much surprised, 'I am obliged to you for your intention, the more so as I am ignorant how I have merited such interference. It is not, however, quite satisfactory to me, because I am accustomed to be the guardian of my own honour.'

'An easy task, I presume, in all cases, Mr. Tyrrel,' answered Jekyl, 'but peculiarly so in the present, when you will find no one so hardy as to assail it. My interference, indeed, would have been unjustifiably officious, had I not been at the moment undertaking a commission implying confidential intercourse with you. For the sake of my own character, it became necessary to establish yours. I know the truth of the whole affair from my friend, the Earl of Etherington, who ought to thank heaven so long as he lives, that saved him on that occasion from the commission of a very great crime.'

'Your friend, sir, has had, in the course of his life, much to thank heaven for, but more for which to ask God's forgiveness.'

'I am no divine, sir,' replied Captain Jekyl, with spirit; 'but I have been told that the same may be said of most men alive.'

'I, at least, cannot dispute it,' said Tyrrel; 'but, to proceed.—Have you found yourself at liberty, Captain Jekyl, to deliver to the public the whole particulars of a rencontre so singular as that which took place between your friend and me?'

'I have not, sir,' said Jekyl; 'I judged it a matter of great delicacy, and which each of you had the like interest to preserve secret.'

'May I beg to know, then,' said Tyrrel, 'how it was possible for you to vindicate my absence from Sir Bingo's rendezvous otherwise?'

'It was only necessary, sir, to pledge my word as a gentleman and a man of honour, characters in which I am pretty well known to the world, that, to my certain personal knowledge, you were hurt in an affair with a friend of mine,

the further particulars of which prudence required should be sunk into oblivion. I think no one will venture to dispute my word, or to require more than my assurance. If there should be any one very hard of faith on the occasion, I shall find a way to satisfy him. In the meanwhile, your outlawry has been rescinded in the most honourable manner; and Sir Bingo, in consideration of his share in giving rise to reports so injurious to you, is desirous to drop all further proceedings in his original quarrel, and hopes the whole matter will be forgot and forgiven on all sides.'

'Upon my word, Captain Jekyl,' answered Tyrrel, 'you lay me under the necessity of acknowledging obligation to you. You have cut a knot which I should have found it very difficult to unloose; for I frankly confess, that, while I was determined not to remain under the stigma put upon me, I should have had great difficulty in clearing myself, without mentioning circumstances, which, were it only for the sake of my father's memory, should be buried in eternal oblivion. I hope your friend feels no continued inconvenience from his hurt?'

'His lordship is nearly quite recovered,' said Jekyl.

'And I trust he did me the justice to own, that, so far as my will was concerned, I am totally guiltless of the purpose of hurting him?'

'He does you full justice in that and everything else,' replied Jekyl; 'regrets the impetuosity of his own temper, and is determined to be on his guard against it in future.'

'That,' said Tyrrel, 'is so far well; and now, may I ask once more, what communication you have to make to me on the part of your friend? Were it from any one but him, whom I have found so uniformly false and treacherous, your own fairness and candour would induce me to hope that this unnatural quarrel might be in some sort ended by your mediation.'

'I then proceed, sir, under more favourable auspices than I expected,' said Captain Jekyl, 'to enter on my commission. You are about to commence a lawsuit, Mr. Tyrrel, if Fame does not wrong you, for the purpose of depriving your brother of his estate and title.'

'The case is not fairly stated, Captain Jekyl,' replied

Tyrrel; 'I commence a lawsuit, when I do commence it, for the sake of ascertaining my own just rights.'

'It comes to the same thing eventually,' said the mediator; 'I am not called upon to decide upon the justice of your claims, but they are, you will allow, newly started. The late Countess of Etherington died in possession—open and undoubted possession—of her rank in society.'

'If she had no real claim to it, sir,' replied Tyrrel, 'she had more than justice who enjoyed it so long; and the injured lady whose claims were postponed, had just so much less. But this is no point for you and me to discuss between us—it must be tried elsewhere.'

'Proofs, sir, of the strongest kind, will be necessary to overthrow a right so well established in public opinion as that of the present possessor of the title of Etherington.'

Tyrrel took a paper from his pocket-book, and, handing it to Captain Jekyl, only answered, 'I have no thoughts of asking you to give up the cause of your friend; but methinks the documents of which I give you a list, may shake your opinion of it.'

Captain Jekyl read, muttering to himself, '*Certificate of marriage, by the Rev. Zadock Kemp, chaplain to the British Embassy at Paris, between Marie de Bellroche, Comtesse de Martigny, and the Right Honourable John Lord Oakendale—Letters between John Earl of Etherington and his lady, under the title of Madame de Martigny—Certificate of baptism—Declaration of the Earl of Etherington on his deathbed.* All this is very well, but may I ask you, Mr. Tyrrel, if it is really your purpose to go to extremity with your brother?'

'He has forgot that he is one—he has lifted his hand against my life.'

'You have shed his blood—twice shed it,' said Jekyl: 'the world will not ask which brother gave the offence, but which received, which inflicted, the severest wound.'

'Your friend has inflicted one on me, sir,' said Tyrrel, 'that will bleed while I have the power of memory.'

'I understand you, sir,' said Captain Jekyl; 'you mean the affair of Miss Mowbray?'

'Spare me on that subject, sir!' said Tyrrel. 'Hitherto I have disputed my most important rights—rights which involved my rank in society, my fortune, the honour of

my mother, with something like composure; but do not say more on the topic you have touched upon, unless you would have before you a madman! Is it possible for you, sir, to have heard even the outline of this story, and to imagine that I can ever reflect on the cold-blooded and most inhuman stratagem, which this friend of yours prepared for two unfortunates, without '—— He started up, and walked impetuously to and fro. 'Since the Fiend himself interrupted the happiness of perfect innocence, there was never such an act of treachery—never such schemes of happiness destroyed—never such inevitable misery prepared for two wretches who had the idiocy to repose perfect confidence in him! Had there been passion in his conduct, it had been the act of a man—a wicked man, indeed, but still a human creature, acting under the influence of human feelings—but his was the deed of a calm, cold, calculating demon, actuated by the basest and most sordid motives of self-interest, joined, as I firmly believe, to an early and inveterate hatred of one whose claims he considered at variance with his own.'

'I am sorry to see you in such a temper,' said Captain Jekyl calmly; 'Lord Etherington, I trust, acted on very different motives than those you impute to him; and if you will but listen to me, perhaps something may be struck out which may accommodate these unhappy disputes.'

'Sir,' said Tyrrel, sitting down again, 'I will listen to you with calmness, as I would remain calm under the probe of a surgeon tenting a festered wound. But when you touch me to the quick, when you prick the very nerve, you cannot expect me to endure without wincing.'

'I will endeavour, then, to be as brief in the operation as I can,' replied Captain Jekyl, who possessed the advantage of the most admirable composure during the whole conference. 'I conclude, Mr. Tyrrel, that the peace, happiness, and honour of Miss Mowbray, are dear to you?'

'Who dare impeach her honour?' said Tyrrel fiercely; then checking himself, added, in a more moderate tone, but one of deep feeling, 'They are dear to me, sir, as my eyesight.'

'My friend holds them in equal regard,' said the captain;

'and has come to the resolution of doing her the most ample justice.'

'He can do her justice no otherwise than by ceasing to haunt this neighbourhood, to think, to speak, even to dream of her.'

'Lord Etherington thinks otherwise,' said Captain Jekyl; 'he believes that if Miss Mowbray has sustained any wrong at his hands, which, of course, I am not called upon to admit, it will be best repaired by the offer to share with her his title, his rank, and his fortune.'

'His title, rank, and fortune, sir, are as much a falsehood as he is himself,' said Tyrrel, with violence—'Marry Clara Mowbray? never!'

'My friend's fortune, you will observe,' replied Jekyl, 'does not rest entirely upon the event of the lawsuit with which you, Mr. Tyrrel, now threaten him. Deprive him, if you can, of the Oakendale estate, he has still a large patrimony by his mother; and besides, as to his marriage with Clara Mowbray, he conceives, that unless it should be the lady's wish to have the ceremony repeated, to which he is most desirous to defer his own opinion, they have only to declare that it has already passed between them.'

'A trick, sir!' said Tyrrel, 'a vile infamous trick! of which the lowest wretch in Newgate would be ashamed—the imposition of one person for another.'

'Of that, Mr. Tyrrel, I have seen no evidence whatever. The clergyman's certificate is clear—Francis Tyrrel is united to Clara Mowbray in the holy bands of wedlock—such is the tenor—there is a copy—nay, stop one instant, if you please, sir. You say there was an imposition in the case—I have no doubt but you speak what you believe, and what Miss Mowbray told you. She was surprised—forced in some measure from the husband she had just married—ashamed to meet her former lover, to whom, doubtless, she had made many a vow of love, and ne'er a true one—what wonder that, unsupported by her bridegroom, she should have changed her tone, and thrown all the blame of her own inconstancy on the absent swain? A woman, at a pinch so critical, will make the most improbable excuse, rather than be found guilty on her own confession.'

'There must be no jesting in this case,' said Tyrrel, his cheek becoming pale, and his voice altered with passion.

'I am quite serious, sir,' replied Jekyl; 'and there is no law court in Britain that would take the lady's word—all she has to offer, and that in her own cause—against a whole body of evidence, direct, and circumstantial, showing that she was, by her own free consent married to the gentleman who now claims her hand. Forgive me, sir—I see you are much agitated—I do not mean to dispute your right of believing what you think is most credible—I only use the freedom of pointing out to you the impression which the evidence is likely to make on the minds of indifferent persons.'

'Your friend,' answered Tyrrel, affecting a composure, which, however, he was far from possessing, 'may think by such arguments to screen his villany; but it cannot avail him—the truth is known to heaven—it is known to me—and there is, besides, one indifferent witness upon earth, who can testify that the most abominable imposition was practised on Miss Mowbray.'

'You mean her cousin,—Hannah Irwin, I think, is her name,' answered Jekyl; 'you see I am fully acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. But where is Hannah Irwin to be found?'

'She will appear, doubtless, in heaven's good time, and to the confusion of him who now imagines the only witness of his treachery—the only one who could tell the truth of this complicated mystery—either no longer lives, or, at least, cannot be brought forward against him, to the ruin of his schemes. Yes, sir, that slight observation of yours has more than explained to me why your friend, or to call him by his true name, Mr. Valentine Bulmer, has not commenced his machinations sooner, and also why he has commenced them now. He thinks himself certain that Hannah Irwin is not now in Britain, or to be produced in a court of justice—he may find himself mistaken.'

'My friend seems perfectly confident of the issue of his cause,' answered Jekyl; 'but for the lady's sake, he is most unwilling to prosecute a suit which must be attended with so many circumstances of painful exposure.'

'Exposure, indeed!' answered Tyrrel; 'thanks to

the traitor who laid a mine so fearful, and who now affects to be reluctant to fire it. Oh! how I am bound to curse that affinity that restrains my hands! I would be content to be the meanest and vilest of society, for one hour of vengeance on this unexampled hypocrite! One thing is certain, sir—your friend will have no living victim. His persecution will kill Clara Mowbray, and fill up the cup of his crimes with the murder of one of the sweetest—— I shall grow a woman, if I say more on the subject!'

'My friend,' said Jekyl, 'since you like best to have him so defined, is as desirous as you can be to spare the lady's feelings; and with that view, not reverting to former passages, he has laid before her brother a proposal of alliance, with which Mr. Mowbray is highly pleased.'

'Ha!' said Tyrrel, starting—'And the lady?'—

'And the lady so far proved favourable, as to consent that Lord Etherington shall visit Shaws Castle.'

'Her consent must have been extorted!' exclaimed Tyrrel.

'It was given voluntarily,' said Jekyl, 'as I am led to understand; unless, perhaps, in so far as the desire to veil these very unpleasing transactions may have operated, I think, naturally enough, to induce her to sink them in eternal secrecy, by accepting Lord Etherington's hand. I see, sir, I give you pain, and am sorry for it. I have no title to call upon you for any exertion of generosity; but should such be Miss Mowbray's sentiments, is it too much to expect of you, that you will not compromise the lady's honour by insisting upon former claims, and opening up disreputable transactions so long past?'

'Captain Jekyl,' said Tyrrel solemnly, 'I have no claims. Whatever I might have had, were cancelled by the act of treachery through which your friend endeavoured too successfully to supplant me. Were Clara Mowbray as free from her pretended marriage as law could pronounce her, still with me—*me* at least of all men in the world—the obstacle must ever remain, that the nuptial benediction has been pronounced over her, and the man whom I must for once call *brother*.' He stopped at that word, as if it had cost him agony to pronounce it, and then resumed:—'No, sir, I have no views of personal advantage in this matter—

they have been long annihilated—But I will not permit Clara Mowbray to become the wife of a villain—I will watch over her with thoughts as spotless as those of her guardian angel. I have been the cause of all the evil she has sustained —I first persuaded her to quit the path of duty—I, of all men who live, am bound to protect her from the misery—from the guilt which must attach to her as this man's wife. I will never believe that she wishes it—I will never believe that, in calm mind and sober reason, she can be brought to listen to such a guilty proposal. But her mind—alas ! —is not of the firm texture it once could boast ; and your friend knows well how to press on the spring of every passion that can agitate and alarm her. Threats of exposure may extort her consent to this most unfitting match, if they do not indeed drive her to suicide, which I think the most likely termination. I will, therefore, be strong where she is weak. Your friend, sir, must at least strip his proposals of their fine gilding. I will satisfy Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's of his false pretences, both to rank and fortune ; and I rather think he will protect his sister against the claim of a needy profligate, though he might be dazzled with the alliance of a wealthy peer.'

'Your cause, sir, is not yet won,' answered Jekyl ; 'and when it is, your brother will retain property enough to entitle him to marry a greater match than Miss Mowbray, besides the large estate of Nettlewood, to which that alliance must give him right. But I would wish to make some accommodation between you, if it were possible. You profess, Mr. Tyrrel, to lay aside all selfish wishes and views in this matter, and to look entirely to Miss Mowbray's safety and happiness ? '

'Such, upon my honour, is the exclusive purpose of my interference—I would give all I am worth to procure her an hour of quiet—for happiness she will never know again.'

'Your anticipations of Miss Mowbray's distress,' answered Jekyl, 'are, I understand, founded upon the character of my friend. You think him a man of light principle, and because he overreached you in a juvenile intrigue, you conclude that now, in his more steady and advanced years, the happiness of the lady in whom you are so much interested ought not to be trusted to him ? '

'There may be other grounds,' said Tyrrel hastily; 'but you may argue upon those you have named, as sufficient to warrant my interference.'

'How, then, if I should propose some accommodation of this nature? Lord Etherington does not pretend to the ardour of a passionate lover. He lives much in the world, and has no desire to quit it. Miss Mowbray's health is delicate—her spirits variable—and retirement would most probably be her choice—Suppose—I am barely putting a supposition—suppose that a marriage between two persons so circumstanced were rendered necessary or advantageous to both—suppose that such a marriage were to secure to one party a large estate—were to insure the other against all the consequences of an unpleasant exposure—still, both ends might be obtained by the mere ceremony of marriage passing between them. There might be a previous contract of separation, with suitable provisions for the lady, and stipulations by which the husband should renounce all claim to her society. Such things happen every season, if not on the very marriage-day, yet before the honeymoon is over. Wealth and freedom would be the lady's, and as much rank as you, sir, supposing your claims just, may think proper to leave them.'

There was a long pause, during which Tyrrel underwent many changes of countenance, which Jekyl watched carefully, without pressing him for an answer. At length he replied, 'There is much in your proposal, Captain Jekyl, which I might be tempted to accede to, as one manner of unloosing this Gordian knot, and a compromise by which Miss Mowbray's future tranquillity would be in some degree provided for. But I would rather trust a fanged adder than your friend, unless I saw him fettered by the strongest ties of interest. Besides, I am certain the unhappy lady could never survive the being connected with him in this manner, though but for the single moment when they should appear together at the altar. There are other objections'——

He checked himself, paused, and then proceeded in a calm and self-possessed tone. 'You think, perhaps, even yet, that I have some selfish and interested views in this business; and probably you may feel yourself entitled

to entertain the same suspicion towards me which I avowedly harbour respecting every proposition which originates with your friend. I cannot help it—I can but meet these disadvantageous impressions with plain dealing and honesty; and it is in the spirit of both that *I* make a proposition to *you*. Your friend is attached to rank, fortune, and worldly advantages, in the usual proportion, at least, in which they are pursued by men of the world—this you must admit, and I will not offend you by supposing more.'

'I know few people who do not desire such advantages,' answered Captain Jekyl; 'and I frankly own, that he affects no particular degree of philosophic indifference respecting them.'

'Be it so,' answered Tyrrel. 'Indeed, the proposal you have just made indicates that his pretended claim on this young lady's hand is entirely, or almost entirely, dictated by motives of interest, since you are of opinion that he would be contented to separate from her society on the very marriage-day, provided that, in doing so, he was assured of the Nettlewood property.'

'My proposition was unauthorized by my principal,' answered Jekyl; 'but it is needless to deny that its very tenor implies an idea, on my part, that Lord Etherington is no passionate lover.'

'Well then,' answered Tyrrel. 'Consider, sir, and let him consider well, that the estate and rank he now assumes depend upon my will and pleasure—that, if I prosecute the claims of which that scroll makes you aware, he must descend from the rank of an earl into that of a commoner, stripped of by much the better half of his fortune—a diminution which would be far from being compensated by the estate of Nettlewood, even if he could obtain it, which could only be by means of a lawsuit, precarious in the issue, and most dishonourable in its very essence.'

'Well, sir,' replied Jekyl, 'I perceive your argument—What is your proposal?'

'That I will abstain from prosecuting my claim on those honours and that property—that I will leave Valentine Bulmer in possession of his usurped title and ill-deserved wealth—that I will bind myself under the strongest

penalties never to disturb his possession of the earldom of Etherington, and estates belonging to it—on condition that he allows the woman whose peace of mind he has ruined for ever, to walk through the world in her wretchedness, undisturbed either by his marriage-suit or by any claim founded upon his own most treacherous conduct—in short, that he forbear to molest Clara Mowbray, either by his presence, word, letter, or through the intervention of a third party, and be to her in future as if he did not exist.'

'This is a singular offer,' said the captain; 'may I ask if you are serious in making it?'

'I am neither surprised nor offended at the question,' said Tyrrel. 'I am a man, sir, like others, and affect no superiority to that which all men desire the possession of—a certain consideration and station in society. I am no romantic fool to undervalue the sacrifice I am about to make. I renounce a rank which is and ought to be the more valuable to me, because it involves' (he blushed as he spoke) 'the fame of an honoured mother—because, in failing to claim it, I disobey the commands of a dying father, who wished that by doing so I should declare to the world the penitence which hurried him perhaps to the grave, and the making which public he considered might be some atonement for his errors. From an honoured place in the land I descend voluntarily to become a nameless exile; for, once certain that Clara Mowbray's peace is assured, Britain no longer holds me. All this I do, sir, not in any idle strain of overheated feeling, but seeing, and knowing, and dearly valuing, every advantage which I renounce—yet I do it, and do it willingly, rather than be the cause of further evil to one on whom I have already brought too—too much.'

His voice, in spite of his exertions, faltered as he concluded the sentence, and a big drop which rose in his eye required him for the moment to turn towards the window.

'I am ashamed of this childishness,' he said, turning again to Captain Jekyl; 'if it excites your ridicule, sir, let it be at least a proof of my sincerity.'

'I am far from entertaining such sentiments,' said Jekyl respectfully—for, in a long train of fashionable follies, his heart had not been utterly hardened—'very far indeed. To a proposal so singular as yours, I cannot be expected to

answer—except thus far—the character of the peerage is, I believe, indelible, and cannot be resigned or assumed at pleasure. If you are really Earl of Etherington, I cannot see how your resigning the right may avail my friend.'

'You, sir, it might not avail,' said Tyrrel gravely, 'because you, perhaps, might scorn to exercise a right, or hold a title, that was not legally yours. But your friend will have no such compunctious visitings. If he can act the earl to the eye of the world, he has already shown that his honour and conscience will be easily satisfied.'

'May I take a copy of the memorandum containing this list of documents,' said Captain Jekyl, 'for the information of my constituent?'

'The paper is at your pleasure, sir,' replied Tyrrel; 'it is itself but a copy. But Captain Jekyl,' he added, with a sarcastic expression, 'is, it would seem, but imperfectly let into his friend's confidence—he may be assured his principal is completely acquainted with the contents of this paper, and has accurate copies of the deeds to which it refers.'

'I think it scarce possible,' said Jekyl angrily.

'Possible and certain!' answered Tyrrel. 'My father, shortly preceding his death, sent me—with a most affecting confession of his errors—this list of papers, and acquainted me that he had made a similar communication to your friend. That he did so I have no doubt, however Mr. Bulmer may have thought proper to disguise the circumstance in communication with you. One circumstance, among others, stamps at once his character, and confirms me of the danger he apprehended by my return to Britain. He found means, through a scoundrelly agent, who had made me the usual remittances from my father while alive, to withhold those which were necessary for my return from the Levant, and I was obliged to borrow from a friend.'

'Indeed?' replied Jekyl. 'It is the first time I have heard of these papers—May I inquire where the originals are, and in whose custody?'

'I was in the East,' answered Tyrrel, 'during my father's last illness, and these papers were by him deposited with a respectable commercial house, with which he was connected. They were enclosed in a cover directed to me,

and that again in an envelope, addressed to the principal person in their firm.'

'You must be sensible,' said Captain Jekyl, 'that I can scarcely decide on the extraordinary offer which you have been pleased to make, of resigning the claim founded on these documents, unless I had a previous opportunity of examining them.'

'You shall have that opportunity—I will write to have them sent down by the post—they lie but in small compass.'

'This, then,' said the captain, 'sums up all that can be said at present. Supposing these proofs to be of unexceptionable authenticity, I certainly would advise my friend Etherington to put to sleep a claim so important as yours, even at the expense of resigning his matrimonial speculation—I presume you design to abide by your offer?'

'I am not in the habit of altering my mind—still less of retracting my word,' said Tyrrel, somewhat haughtily.

'We part friends, I hope?' said Jekyl, rising, and taking his leave.

'Not enemies, certainly, Captain Jekyl. I will own to you I owe you my thanks for extricating me from that foolish affair at the Well—nothing could have put me to more inconvenience than the necessity of following to extremity a frivolous quarrel at the present moment.'

'You will come down among us, then?' said Jekyl.

'I certainly shall not wish to appear to hide myself,' answered Tyrrel; 'it is a circumstance might be turned against me—there is a party who will avail himself of every advantage. I have but one path, Captain Jekyl—that of truth and honour.'

Captain Jekyl bowed, and took his leave. So soon as he was gone, Tyrrel locked the door of the apartment, and drawing from his bosom a portrait, gazed on it with a mixture of sorrow and tenderness, until the tears dropped from his eyes.

It was the picture of Clara Mowbray, such as he had known her in the days of their youthful love, and taken by himself, whose early turn for painting had already developed itself. The features of the blooming girl might be yet traced in the fine countenance of the more matured original. But what was now become of the glow which had

shaded her cheek?—what of the arch, yet subdued pleasantry, which lurked in the eye?—what of the joyous content, which composed every feature to the expression of an Euphrosyne? Alas! these were long fled! Sorrow had laid his hand upon her—the purple light of youth was quenched—the glance of innocent gaiety was exchanged for looks now moody with ill-concealed care, now animated by a spirit of reckless and satirical observation.

'What a wreck! what a wreck!' exclaimed Tyrrel; 'and all of one wretch's making. Can I put the last hand to the work, and be her murderer outright? I cannot—I cannot! I will be strong in the resolve I have formed—I will sacrifice all—rank—station—fortune—and fame. Revenge!—Revenge itself, the last good left me—revenge itself I will sacrifice to obtain her such tranquillity as she may be yet capable to enjoy.'

In this resolution he sat down, and wrote a letter to the commercial house with whom the document of his birth, and other relative papers, were deposited, requesting that the packet containing them should be forwarded to him through the post office.

Tyrrel was neither unambitious, nor without those sentiments respecting personal consideration, which are usually united with deep feeling and an ardent mind. It was with a trembling hand, and a watery eye, but with a heart firmly resolved, that he sealed and dispatched the letter; a step towards the resignation, in favour of his mortal enemy, of that rank and condition in life which was his own by right of inheritance, but had so long hung in doubt betwixt them.

CHAPTER XXX

INTRUSION

By my troth, I will go with thee to the lane's-end!—I am a kind of burr—I shall stick.—*Measure for Measure.*

It was now far advanced in autumn. The dew lay thick on the long grass, where it was touched by the sun; but where the sward lay in shadow, it was covered with hoar-frost, and crisped under Jekyl's foot, as he returned

through the woods of Saint Ronan's. The leaves of the ash-tree detached themselves from the branches, and, without an air of wind, fell spontaneously on the path. The mists still lay lazily upon the heights, and the huge old tower of Saint Ronan's was entirely shrouded with vapour, except where a sunbeam, struggling with the mist, penetrated into its wreath so far as to show a projecting turret upon one of the angles of the old fortress, which, long a favourite haunt of the raven, was popularly called the Corbie's Tower. Beneath, the scene was open and lightsome, and the robin-redbreast was chirping his best, to atone for the absence of all other choristers. The fine foliage of autumn was seen in many a glade, running up the sides of each little ravine, russet-hued and golden-specked, and tinged frequently with the red hues of the mountain-ash ; while here and there a huge old fir, the native growth of the soil, flung his broad shadow over the rest of the trees, and seemed to exult in the permanence of his dusky livery over the more showy, but transitory brilliance by which he was surrounded.

Such is the scene, which, so often described in prose and in poetry, yet seldom loses its effect upon the ear or upon the eye, and through which we wander with a strain of mind congenial to the decline of the year. There are few who do not feel the impression ; and even Jekyl, though bred to far different pursuits than those most favourable to such contemplation, relaxed his pace to admire the uncommon beauty of the landscape.

Perhaps, also, he was in no hurry to rejoin the Earl of Etherington, towards whose service he felt himself more disinclined since his interview with Tyrrel. It was clear that that nobleman had not fully reposed in his friend the confidence promised ; he had not made him aware of the existence of those important documents of proof, on which the whole fate of his negotiation appeared now to hinge, and in so far had deceived him. Yet, when he pulled from his pocket, and re-read Lord Etherington's explanatory letter, Jekyl could not help being more sensible than he had been on the first perusal, how much the present possessor of that title felt alarmed at his brother's claims ; and he had some compassion for the natural feeling that must have

rendered him shy of communicating at once the very worst view of his case, even to his most confidential friend. Upon the whole, he remembered that Lord Etherington had been his benefactor to an unusual extent; that, in return, he had promised the young nobleman his active and devoted assistance in extricating him from the difficulties with which he seemed at present surrounded; that, in quality of his confidant, he had become acquainted with the most secret transactions of his life; and that it could only be some very strong cause indeed which could justify breaking off from him at this moment. Yet he could not help wishing either that his own obligations had been less, his friend's cause better, or, at least, the friend himself more worthy of assistance.

'A beautiful morning, sir, for such a foggy, d—d climate as this,' said a voice close by Jekyl's ear, which made him at once start out of his contemplation. He turned half round, and beside him stood our honest friend Touchwood, his throat muffled in his large Indian handkerchief, huge gouty shoes thrust upon his feet, his bob-wig well powdered, and the gold-headed cane in his hand, carried upright as a sergeant's halberd. One glance of contemptuous survey entitled Jekyl, according to his modish ideas, to rank the old gentlemen as a regular-built quiz, and to treat him as the young gentlemen of his Majesty's Guards think themselves entitled to use every unfashionable variety of the human species. A slight inclination of a bow, and a very cold 'You have the advantage of me, sir,' dropped as it were unconsciously from his tongue, were meant to repress the old gentleman's advances, and moderate his ambition to be hail-fellow-well-met with his betters. But Mr. Touchwood was callous to the intended rebuke; he had lived too much at large upon the world, and was far too confident of his own merits, to take a repulse easily, or to permit his modesty to interfere with any purpose which he had formed.

'Advantage of you, sir?' he replied; 'I have lived too long in the world not to keep all the advantages I have, and get all I can—and I reckon it one that I have overtaken you, and shall have the pleasure of your company to the Well.'

'I should but interrupt your worthier meditations, sir,'

said the other ; 'besides, I am a modest young man, and think myself fit for no better company than my own—moreover, I walk slow—very slow. Good morning to you, Mr. A—A—I believe my treacherous memory has let slip your name, sir.'

'My name ! Why, your memory must have been like Pat Murtough's greyhound, that let the hare go before he caught it. You never heard my name in your life. Touchwood is my name. What d'ye think of it, now you know it? '

'I am really no connoisseur in surnames,' answered Jekyl ; 'and it is quite the same to me whether you call yourself Touchwood or Touchstone. Don't let me keep you from walking on, sir. You will find breakfast far advanced at the Well, sir, and your walk has probably given you an appetite.'

'Which will serve me to luncheon-time, I promise you,' said Touchwood ; 'I always drink my coffee as soon as my feet are in my pabouches—it 's the way all over the East. Never trust my breakfast to their scalding milk-and-water at the Well, I assure you ; and for walking slow, I have had a touch of the gout.'

'Have you ? ' said Jekyl ; 'I am sorry for that ; because, if you have no mind to breakfast, I have—and so, Mr. Touchstone, good-morrow to you.'

But, although the young soldier went off at double-quick time, his pertinacious attendant kept close by his side, displaying an activity which seemed inconsistent with his make and his years, and talking away the whole time, so as to show that his lungs were not in the least degree incommoded by the unusual rapidity of motion.

'Nay, young gentleman, if you are for a good smart walk, I am for you, and the gout may be d—d. You are a lucky fellow to have youth on your side ; but yet, so far as between the Aultoun and the Well, I think I could walk you for your sum, barring running—all heel and toe—equal weight, and I would match Barclay himself for a mile.'

'Upon my word, you are a gay old gentleman ! ' said Jekyl, relaxing his pace ; 'and if we must be fellow-travellers, though I can see no great occasion for it, I must even shorten sail for you.'

So saying, and as if another means of deliverance had

occurred to him, he slackened his pace, took out a morocco case of cigars, and, lighting one with his *briquet*, said, while he walked on, and bestowed as much of its fragrance as he could upon the face of his intrusive companion, 'Vergeben sie, mein Herr—ich bin erzogen in kaiserlicher Dienst—muss rauchen ein klein wenig.'[1]

'Rauchen sie immerfort,' said Touchwood, producing a huge meerschaum, which, suspended by a chain from his neck, lurked in the bosom of his coat, 'habe auch mien Pfeichen—Sehen sie den lieben Kopf!'[2] and he began to return the smoke, if not the fire, of his companion, in full volumes, and with interest.

'The devil take the twaddle,' said Jekyl to himself, 'he is too old and too fat to be treated after the manner of Professor Jackson; and, on my life, I cannot tell what to make of him. He is a residenter too—I must tip him the cold shoulder, or he will be pestering me eternally.'

Accordingly, he walked on, sucking his cigar, and apparently in as abstracted a mood as Mr. Cargill himself, without paying the least attention to Touchwood, who, nevertheless, continued talking, as if he had been addressing the most attentive listener in Scotland, whether it were the favourite nephew of a cross, old, rich bachelor, or the aide-de-camp of some old rusty firelock of a general, who tells stories of the American war.

'And so, sir, I can put up with any companion at a pinch, for I have travelled in all sorts of ways, from a caravan down to a carrier's cart; but the best society is the best everywhere; and I am happy I have fallen in with a gentleman who suits me so well as you. That grave, steady attention of yours reminds me of Elfi Bey—you might talk to him in English, or anything he understood least of—you might have read Aristotle to Elfi, and not a muscle would he stir—give him his pipe, and he would sit on his cushion with a listening air, as if he took in every word of what you said.'

Captain Jekyl threw away the remnant of his cigar,

[1] Forgive me, sir, I was bred in the Imperial service, and must smoke a little.

[2] Smoke as much as you please; I have got my pipe, too.—See what a beautiful head!

with a little movement of pettishness, and began to whistle an opera air.

'There again, now! That is just so like the Marquis of Roccombole, another dear friend of mine, that whistles all the time you talk to him—He says he learnt it in the Reign of Terror, when a man was glad to whistle, to show his throat was whole. And talking of great folk, what do you think of this affair between Lord Etherington and his brother, or cousin, as some folk call him?'

Jekyl absolutely started at the question; a degree of emotion, which, had it been witnessed by any of his fashionable friends, would for ever have ruined his pretensions to rank in their first order.

'What affair?' he asked, so soon as he could command a certain degree of composure.

'Why, you know the news surely? Francis Tyrrel, whom all the company voted a coward the other day, turns out as brave a fellow as any of us; for, instead of having run away to avoid having his own throat cut by Sir Bingo Binks, he was at the very moment engaged in a gallant attempt to murder his elder brother, or his more lawful brother, or his cousin, or some such near relation.'

'I believe you are misinformed, sir,' said Jekyl dryly, and then resumed, as deftly as he could, his proper character of a *pococurante*.

'I am told,' continued Touchwood, 'one Jekyl acted as a second to them both on the occasion—a proper fellow, sir—one of those fine gentlemen whom we pay for polishing the pavement in Bond Street, and looking at a thick shoe and a pair of worsted stockings, as if the wearer were none of their paymasters. However, I believe the Commander-in-chief is like to discard him when he hears what has happened.'

'Sir!' said Jekyl fiercely—then, recollecting the folly of being angry with an original of his companion's description, he proceeded more coolly, 'You are misinformed—Captain Jekyl knew nothing of any such matter as you refer to—you talk of a person you know nothing of—Captain Jekyl is'—— (Here he stopped a little, scandalized, perhaps, at the very idea of vindicating himself to such a personage from such a charge.)

'Aye, aye,' said the traveller, filling up the chasm in his own way, 'he is not worth our talking of, certainly—but I believe he knew as much of the matter as either you or I do, for all that.'

Sir, this is either a very great mistake, or wilful impertinence,' answered the officer. 'However absurd or intrusive you may be, I cannot allow you, either in ignorance or incivility, to use the name of Captain Jekyl with disrespect. I am Captain Jekyl, sir.'

'Very like, very like,' said Touchwood, with the most provoking indifference; 'I guessed as much before.'

'Then, sir, you may guess what is likely to follow, when a gentleman hears himself unwarrantably and unjustly slandered,' replied Captain Jekyl, surprised and provoked that his annunciation of name and rank seemed to be treated so lightly. 'I advise you, sir, not to proceed too far upon the immunities of your age and insignificance.'

'I never presume further than I have good reason to think necessary, Captain Jekyl,' answered Touchwood, with great composure. 'I am too old, as you say, for any such idiotical business as a duel, which no nation I know of practises but our silly fools of Europe—and then, as for your switch, which you are grasping with so much dignity, that is totally out of the question. Look you, young gentleman; four-fifths of my life have been spent among men who do not set a man's life at the value of a button on his collar—every person learns, in such cases, to protect himself as he can; and whoever strikes me must stand to the consequences. I have always a brace of bull-dogs about me, which put age and youth on a level. So suppose me horse-whipped, and pray, at the same time, suppose yourself shot through the body. The same exertion of imagination will serve for both purposes.'

So saying, he exhibited a very handsome, highly-finished, and richly-mounted pair of pistols.

'Catch me without my tools,' said he, significantly buttoning his coat over the arms, which were concealed in a side-pocket, ingeniously contrived for that purpose. 'I see you do not know what to make of me,' he continued, in a familiar and confidential tone; 'but, to tell you the truth, everybody that has meddled in this Saint Ronan's business

is a little off the hooks—something of a *tête exaltée*, in plain words, a little crazy, or so; and I do not affect to be much wiser than other people.'

'Sir,' said Jekyl, 'your manners and discourse are so unprecedented that I must ask your meaning plainly and decidedly—Do you mean to insult me, or no?'

'No insult at all, young gentleman—all fair meaning, and above board—I only wished to let you know what the world may say, that is all.'

'Sir,' said Jekyl hastily, 'the world may tell what lies it pleases; but I was not present at the rencontre between Etherington and Mr. Tyrrel—I was some hundred miles off.'

'There now,' said Touchwood, 'there *was* a rencontre between them—the very thing I wanted to know.'

'Sir,' said Jekyl, aware too late that, in his haste to vindicate himself, he had committed his friend, 'I desire you will found nothing on an expression hastily used to vindicate myself from a false aspersion—I only meant to say, if there was an affair such as you talk of, I knew nothing of it.'

'Never mind—never mind—I shall make no bad use of what I have learned,' said Touchwood. 'Were you to eat your words with the best fish sauce (and that is Burgess's), I have got all the information from them I wanted.'

'You are strangely pertinacious, sir,' replied Jekyl.

'Oh, a rock, a piece of flint for that—What I have learned I have learned, but I will make no bad use of it. Hark ye, Captain, I have no malice against your friend—perhaps the contrary—but he is in a bad course, sir—has kept a false reckoning, for as deep as he thinks himself; and I tell you so, because I hold you (your finery out of the question) to be, as Hamlet says, indifferent honest; but, if you were not, why, necessity is necessity; and a man will take a Bedouin for his guide in the desert, whom he would not trust with an asper in the cultivated field; so I think of reposing some confidence in you—have not made up my mind yet, though.'

'On my word, sir, I am greatly flattered both by your intentions and your hesitation,' said Captain Jekyl. 'You were pleased to say just now, that everyone concerned with these matters was something particular.'

'Aye, aye—something crazy—a little mad, or so. That was what I said, and I can prove it.'

'I should be glad to hear the proof,' said Jekyl—'I hope you do not except yourself?'

'Oh! by no means,' answered Touchwood; 'I am one of the maddest old boys ever slept out of straw, or went loose. But you can put fishing questions in your turn, Captain, I see that—you would fain know how much, or how little, I am in all these secrets. Well, that is as hereafter may be. In the meantime, here are my proofs. Old Scrogie Mowbray was mad, to like the sound of Mowbray better than that of Scrogie; young Scrogie was mad, not to like it as well. The old Earl of Etherington was not sane when he married a French wife in secret, and devilish mad indeed when he married an English one in public. Then for the good folk here, Mowbray of Saint Ronan's is cracked, when he wishes to give his sister to he knows not precisely whom; she is a fool not to take him, because she *does* know who he is, and what has been between them; and your friend is maddest of all, who seeks her under so heavy a penalty;—and you and I, Captain, go mad gratis, for company's sake, when we mix ourselves with such a mess of folly and frenzy.'

'Really, sir, all that you have said is an absolute riddle to me,' replied the embarrassed Jekyl.

'Riddles may be read,' said Touchwood, nodding; 'if you have any desire to read mine, pray take notice, that this being our first interview, I have exerted myself *faire les frais du conversation*, as Jack Frenchman says; if you want another, you may come to Mrs. Dods's, at the Cleikum Inn, any day before Saturday, at four precisely, when you will find none of your half-starved, long-limbed bundles of bones, which you call poultry at the table-d'hôte, but a right Chittygong fowl—I got Mrs. Dods the breed from old Ben Vandewash, the Dutch broker—stewed to a minute, with rice and mushrooms. If you can eat without a silver fork, and your appetite serves you, you shall be welcome—that's all. So, good morning to you, good master lieutenant, for a captain of the Guards is but a lieutenant after all.'

So saying, and ere Jekyl could make any answer, the old gentleman turned short off into a path which led to

the healing fountain, branching away from that which conducted to the hotel.

Uncertain with whom he had been holding a conversation so strange, Jekyl remained looking after him, until his attention was roused by a little boy, who crept out from an adjoining thicket, with a switch in his hand, which he had been just cutting—probably against regulations to the contrary effect made and provided, for he held himself ready to take cover in the copse again, in case any one were in sight who might be interested in chastising his delinquency. Captain Jekyl easily recognized in him one of that hopeful class of imps who pick up a precarious livelihood about places of public resort, by going errands, brushing shoes, doing the groom's and coachman's work in the stables, driving donkeys, opening gates, and so forth, for but one-tenth part of their time, spending the rest in gambling, sleeping in the sun, and otherwise qualifying themselves to exercise the profession of thieves and pickpockets, either separately, or in conjunction with those of waiters, grooms, and postilions. The little outcast had an indifferent pair of pantaloons, and about half a jacket, for, like Pentapolin with the naked arm, he went on action with his right shoulder bare ; a third part of what had once been a hat covered his hair, bleached white with the sun, and his face, as brown as a berry, was illuminated by a pair of eyes, which, for spying out either peril or profit, might have rivalled those of the hawk. In a word, it was the original Puck of the Shaws dramaticals.

'Come hither, ye unhanged whelp,' said Jekyl, 'and tell me if you know the old gentleman that passed down the walk just now—yonder he is, still in sight.'

'It is the naboab,' said the boy ; 'I could swear to his back among all the backs at the Waal, your honour.'

'What do you call a nabob, you varlet ?'

'A naboab—a naboab ?' answered the scout ; 'odd, I believe it is ane comes frae foreign parts, with mair siller than his pouches can haud, and spills it a' through the country—they are as yellow as orangers, and maun hae a' thing their ain gate.'

'And what is this naboab's name, as you call him ?' demanded Jekyl.

'His name is Touchwood,' said his informer, 'ye may see him at the Waal every morning.'

'I have not seen him at the ordinary.'

'Na, na,' answered the boy; 'he 's a queer auld cull, he disna frequent wi' other folk, but lives upby at the Cleikum. He gave me half-a-crown yince, and forbade me to play it awa' at pitch and toss.'

'And you disobeyed him, of course?'

'Na, I didna dis-obeyed him—I played it awa' at neevie-neevie-nick-nack.'

'Well, there is sixpence for thee; lose it to the devil in any way thou think'st proper.'

So saying, he gave the little galopin his donative, and a slight rap on the pate at the same time, which sent him scouring from his presence. He himself hastened to Lord Etherington's apartments, and, as luck would have it, found the earl alone.

CHAPTER XXXI

DISCUSSION

I will converse with iron-witted fools
And unrespective boys—none are for me
That look into me with suspicious eyes.
Richard III.

'How now, Jekyl!' said Lord Etherington eagerly; 'what news from the enemy? Have you seen him?'

'I have,' replied Jekyl.

'And in what humour did you find him?—in none that was very favourable, I dare say, for you have a baffled and perplexed look, that confesses a losing game—I have often warned you how your hang-dog look betrays you at brag—And then, when you would fain brush up your courage, and put a good face on a bad game, your bold looks always remind me of a standard hoisted only half-mast high, and betraying melancholy and dejection, instead of triumph and defiance.'

'I am only holding the cards for your lordship at present,'

answered Jekyl ; 'and I wish to heaven there may be no one looking over the hand.'

'How do you mean by that ?'

'Why, I was beset, on returning through the wood, by an old bore, a nabob, as they call him, and Touchwood by name.'

'I have seen such a quiz about,' said Lord Etherington —'What of him ?'

'Nothing,' answered Jekyl ; 'except that he seemed to know much more of your affairs than you would wish or are aware of. He smoked the truth of the rencontre betwixt Tyrrel and you, and what is worse—I must needs confess the truth—he contrived to wring out of me a sort of confirmation of his suspicions.'

''Slife ! wert thou mad ?' said Lord Etherington, turning pale ; 'His is the very tongue to send the story through the whole country—Hal, you have undone me.'

'I hope not,' said Jekyl ; 'I trust in heaven I have not ! His knowledge is quite general—only that there was some scuffle between you—Do not look so dismayed about it, or I will e'en go back and cut his throat, to secure his secrecy.'

'Cursed indiscretion !' answered the earl—'how could you let him fix on you at all ?'

'I cannot tell,' said Jekyl—'he has powers of boring beyond ten of the dullest of all possible doctors—stuck like a limpet to a rock—a perfect double of the Old Man of the Sea, whom I take to have been the greatest bore on record.'

'Could you not have turned him on his back like a turtle, and left him there ?' said Lord Etherington.

'And had an ounce of lead in my body for my pains ? No—no—we have already had footpad work enough—I promise you the old buck was armed, as if he meant to bing folks on the low toby.'[1]

'Well—well—but Martigny, or Tyrrel, as you call him —what says he ?'

'Why, Tyrrel, or Martigny, as your lordship calls him, answered Jekyl, 'will by no means listen to your lordship's proposition. He will not consent that Miss Mowbray's

[1] 'Rob as a footpad.'

happiness shall be placed in your lordship's keeping; nay, it did not meet his approbation a bit the more, when I hinted at the acknowledgement of the marriage, or the repetition of the ceremony, attended by an immediate separation, which I thought I might venture to propose.'

'And on what grounds does he refuse so reasonable an accommodation?' said Lord Etherington—'Does he still seek to marry the girl himself?'

'I believe he thinks the circumstances of the case render that impossible,' replied his confidant.

'What? then he would play the dog in the manger,—neither eat nor let eat? He shall find himself mistaken. She has used me like a dog, Jekyl, since I saw you; and, by Jove! I will have her, that I may break her pride, and cut him to the liver with the agony of seeing it.'

'Nay, but hold—hold!' said Jekyl; 'perhaps I have something to say on his part that may be a better compromise than all you could have by teasing him. He is willing to purchase what he calls Miss Mowbray's tranquillity at the expense of his resignation of his claims to your father's honours and estate; and he surprised me very much, my lord, by showing me this list of documents, which, I am afraid, makes his success more than probable, if there really are such proofs in existence.' Lord Etherington took the paper, and seemed to read with much attention, while Jekyl proceeded,—'He has written to procure these evidences from the person with whom they are deposited.'

'We shall see what like they are when they arrive,' said Lord Etherington; 'they come by post, I suppose?'

'Yes; and may be immediately expected,' said Jekyl.

'Well—he is my brother on one side of the house at least,' said Lord Etherington; 'and I should not much like to have him lagged for forgery, which I suppose will be the end of his bolstering up an unsubstantial plea by fabricated documents—I should like to see these papers he talks of.'

'But, my lord,' replied Jekyl, 'Tyrrel's allegation is, that you *have* seen them; and that copies, at least, were made out for you, and are in your possession—such is his averment.'

'He lies,' answered Lord Etherington, 'so far as he

pretends I know of such papers. I consider the whole story as froth—foam—fudge, or whatever is most unsubstantial. It will prove such when the papers appear, if indeed they ever will appear. The whole is a bully from beginning to end ; and I wonder at thee, Jekyl, for being so thirsty after syllabub, that you can swallow such whipped cream as that stuff amounts to. No, no—I know my advantage, and shall use it so as to make all their hearts bleed. As for these papers, I recollect now that my agent talked of copies of some manuscripts having been sent him, but the originals were not then forthcoming ; and I'll bet the long odds that they never are—mere fabrications—if I thought otherwise, would I not tell you ? '

' Certainly, I hope you would, my lord,' said Jekyl ; ' for I see no chance of my being useful to you, unless I have the honour to enjoy your confidence.'

' You do—you do, my friend,' said Etherington, shaking him by the hand ; ' and since I must consider your present negotiation as failed, I must devise some other mode of settling with this mad and troublesome fellow.'

' No violence, my lord,' said Jekyl, once more, and with much emphasis.

' None—none—none, by Heaven ! Why, thou suspicious wretch, must I swear, to quell your scruples ? On the contrary, it shall not be my fault, if we are not on decent terms.'

' It would be infinitely to the advantage of both your characters if you could bring that to pass,' answered Jekyl ; ' and if you are serious in wishing it, I will endeavour to prepare Tyrrel. He comes to the Well or to the ordinary to-day, and it would be highly ridiculous to make a scene.'

' True, true ; find him out, my dear Jekyl, and persuade him how foolish it will be to bring our family quarrels out before strangers, and for their amusement. They shall see the two bears can meet without biting. Go—go—I will follow you instantly—go, and remember you have my full and exclusive confidence.—Go, half-bred, startling fool ! ' he continued, the instant Jekyl had left the room, ' with just spirits enough to ensure your own ruin, by hurrying you into what you are not up to. But he has character in the world—is brave—and one of those whose

countenance gives a fair face to a doubtful business. He is my creature, too—I have bought and paid for him, and it would be idle extravagance not to make use of him—But as to confidence—no confidence, honest Hal, beyond that which cannot be avoided. If I wanted a confidant, here comes a better than thou by half—Solmes has no scruples—he will always give me money's worth of zeal and secrecy *for* money.'

His lordship's valet at this moment entered the apartment, a grave, civil-looking man, past the middle age, with a sallow complexion, a dark thoughtful eye, slow, and sparing of speech, and sedulously attentive to all the duties of his situation.

'Solmes,' said Lord Etherington, and then stopped short.

'My lord'—There was a pause; and when Lord Etherington had again said, 'Solmes!' and his valet had answered, 'Your lordship,' there was a second pause; until the earl, as if recollecting himself, 'Oh! I remember what I wished to say—it was about the course of post here. It is not very regular, I believe?'

'Regular enough, my lord, so far as concerns this place—the people in the Aultoun do not get their letters in course.'

'And why not, Solmes?' said his lordship.

'The old woman who keeps the little inn there, my lord, is on bad terms with the post-mistress—the one will not send for the letters, and the other will not dispatch them to the village; so, betwixt them, they are sometimes lost, or mislaid, or returned to the General Post Office.'

'I wish that may not be the case of a packet which I expect in a few days—it should have been here already, or, perhaps, it may arrive in the beginning of the week—it is from that formal ass, Trueman the quaker, who addresses me by my Christian and family name, Francis Tyrrel. He is like enough to mistake the inn, too, and I should be sorry it fell into Monsieur Martigny's hands—I suppose you know he is in that neighbourhood?—Look after its safety, Solmes—quietly, you understand; because people might put odd constructions, as if I were wanting a letter which was not my own.'

'I understand perfectly, my lord,' said Solmes, without

exhibiting the slightest change in his sallow countenance, though perfectly comprehending the nature of the service required.

'And here is a note will pay for postage,' said the earl, putting into his valet's hand a bank-bill of considerable value; 'and you may keep the balance for occasional expenses.'

This was also fully understood; and Solmes, too politic and cautious even to look intelligence, or acknowledge gratitude, made only a bow of acquiescence, put the note into his pocket-book, and assured his lordship that his commands should be punctually attended to.

'There goes the agent for my money, and for my purpose,' said Lord Etherington exultingly; 'no extorting of confidence, no demanding of explanations, no tearing off the veil with which a delicate manœuvre is *gazé*—all excuses are received as *argent comptant*, provided only that the best excuse of all, the *argent comptant* itself, come to recommend them. Yet I will trust no one—I will out, like a skilful general, and reconnoitre in person.'

With this resolution, Lord Etherington put on his surtout and cap, and sallying from his apartments, took the way to the bookseller's shop, which also served as post office and circulating library; and being in the very centre of the parade (for so is termed the broad terrace-walk which leads from the inn to the Well), it formed a convenient lounging-place for newsmongers and idlers of every description.

The earl's appearance created, as usual, a sensation upon the public promenade; but whether it was the suggestion of his own alarmed conscience, or that there was some real cause for the remark, he could not help thinking his reception was of a more doubtful character than usual. His fine figure and easy manners produced their usual effect, and all whom he spoke to received his attention as an honour; but none offered, as usual, to unite themselves to him, or to induce him to join their party. He seemed to be looked on rather as an object of observation and attention, than as making one of the company; and to escape from a distant gaze, which became rather embarrassing, he turned into the little emporium of news and literature.

He entered unobserved, just as Lady Penelope had finished reading some verses, and was commenting upon them with all the alacrity of a *femme savante*, in possession of something which no one is to hear repeated oftener than once.

'Copy—no indeed!' these were the snatches which reached Lord Etherington's ear, from the group of which her ladyship formed the centre—'honour bright—I must not betray poor Chatterly—besides, his lordship is my friend, and a person of rank, you know—so one would not—You have not got the book, Mr. Pott?—you have not got Statius?—you never have anything one longs to see.'

'Very sorry, my lady—quite out of copies at present—I expect some in my next monthly parcel.'

'Good lack, Mr. Pott, that is your never-failing answer,' said Lady Penelope; 'I believe if I were to ask you for the last new edition of the Alkoran, you would tell me it was coming down in your next monthly parcel.'

'Can't say, my lady, really,' answered Mr. Pott; 'have not seen the work advertised yet; but I have no doubt, if it is likely to take, there will be copies in my next monthly parcel.'

'Mr. Pott's supplies are always in the *paullo post futurum* tense,' said Mr. Chatterly, who was just entering the shop.

'Ah! Mr. Chatterly, are you there?' said Lady Penelope; 'I lay my death at your door—I cannot find this Thebaid, where Polynices and his brother'——

'Hush, my lady!—hush, for Heaven's sake!' said the poetical divine, and looked towards Lord Etherington. Lady Penelope took the hint, and was silent; but she had said enough to call up the traveller Touchwood, who raised his head from the newspaper which he was studying, and, without addressing his discourse to any one in particular, ejaculated, as if in scorn of Lady Penelope's geography—

'Polynices? Polly Peachum. There is no such place in the Thebais—the Thebais is in Egypt—the mummies come from the Thebais—I have been in the catacombs—caves very curious indeed—we were lapidated by the natives—pebbled to some purpose, I give you my word. My janizary thrashed a whole village by way of retaliation.'

While he was thus proceeding, Lord Etherington, as if

in a listless mood, was looking at the letters which stood ranged on the chimney-piece, and carrying on a languid dialogue with Mrs. Pott, whose person and manners were not ill adapted to her situation, for she was good-looking, and vastly fine and affected.

'Number of letters here which don't seem to find owners, Mrs. Pott?'

'Great number, indeed, my lord—it is a great vexation, for we are obliged to return them to the post office, and the postage is charged against us if they are lost; and how can one keep sight of them all?'

'Any love-letters among them, Mrs. Pott?' said his lordship, lowering his tone.

'Oh, fie! my lord, how should I know?' answered Mrs. Pott, dropping her voice to the same cadence.

'Oh! every one can tell a love-letter—that has ever received one, that is—one knows them without opening—they are always folded hurriedly and sealed carefully—and the direction manifests a kind of tremulous agitation, that marks the state of the writer's nerves—that now,'—pointing with his switch to a letter upon the chimney-piece, 'that *must* be a love-letter.'

'He, he, he!' giggled Mrs. Pott. 'I beg pardon for laughing, my lord—but—he, he, he!—that is a letter from one Bindloose, the banker body, to the old woman Luckie Dods, as they call her, at the change-house in the Aultoun.'

'Depend upon it then, Mrs. Pott, that your neighbour, Mrs. Dods, has got a lover in Mr. Bindloose—unless the banker has been shaking hands with the palsy. Why do you not forward her letter?—you are very cruel to keep it in durance here.'

'Me forward!' answered Mrs. Pott; 'the capernoity, old, girning alewife may wait long enough or I forward it—She'll not loose the letters that come to her by the King's post, and she must go on troking wi' the old carrier, as if there was no post-house in the neighbourhood. But the solicitor will be about wi' her one of these days.'

'Oh! you are too cruel—you really should send the love-letter; consider, the older she is, the poor soul has the less time to lose.'

But this was a topic on which Mrs. Pott understood no

jesting. She was well aware of our matron's inveteracy against her and her establishment, and she resented it as a placeman resents the efforts of a radical. She answered something sulkily, 'That they that loosed letters should have letters; and neither Luckie Dods, nor any of her lodgers, should ever see the scrape of a pen from the Saint Ronan's office, that they did not call for and pay for.'

It is probable that this declaration contained the essence of the information which Lord Etherington had designed to extract by his momentary flirtation with Mrs. Pott, for when, retreating as it were from this sore subject, she asked him, in a pretty mincing tone, to try his skill in pointing out another love-letter, he only answered carelessly, 'that in order to do that he must write her one;' and leaving his confidential station by her little throne, he lounged through the narrow shop, bowed slightly to Lady Penelope as he passed, and issued forth upon the parade, where he saw a spectacle which might have appalled a man of less self-possession than himself.

Just as he left the shop, little Miss Digges entered almost breathless, with the emotion of impatience and of curiosity, 'Oh la! my lady, what do you stay here for? Mr. Tyrrel has just entered the other end of the parade this moment, and Lord Etherington is walking that way—they must meet each other. O Lord! come, come away, and see them meet! I wonder if they'll speak—I hope they won't fight—Oh la! do come, my lady!'

'I must go with you, I find,' said Lady Penelope; 'it is the strangest thing, my love, that curiosity of yours about other folk's matters—I wonder what your mamma will say to it.'

'Oh! never mind mamma—nobody minds her—papa, nor nobody—Do come, dearest Lady Pen, or I will run away by myself. Mr. Chatterly, do make her come!'

'I must come, it seems,' said Lady Penelope, 'or I shall have a pretty account of you.'

But, notwithstanding this rebuke, and forgetting, at the same time, that people of quality ought never to seem in a hurry, Lady Penelope, with such of her satellites as she could hastily collect around her, tripped along the parade with unusual haste, in sympathy, doubtless, with

Miss Digges's curiosity, as her ladyship declared she had none of her own.

Our friend the traveller had also caught up Miss Digges's information; and, breaking off abruptly an account of the Great Pyramid, which had been naturally introduced by the mention of the Thebais, and echoing the fair alarmist's words, 'hope they won't fight,' he rushed upon the parade, and bustled along as hard as his sturdy supporters could carry him. If the gravity of the traveller and the delicacy of Lady Penelope were surprised into unwonted haste from their eagerness to witness the meeting of Tyrrel and Lord Etherington, it may be well supposed that the decorum of the rest of the company was a slender restraint on their curiosity, and that they hurried to be present at the expected scene, with the alacrity of gentlemen of the fancy hastening to a set-to.

In truth, though the meeting afforded little sport to those who expected dire conclusions, it was, nevertheless, sufficiently interesting to those spectators who are accustomed to read the language of suppressed passion, betraying itself at the moment when the parties are most desirous to conceal it.

Tyrrel had been followed by several loiterers so soon as he entered the public walk; and their number was now so much reinforced that he saw himself with pain and displeasure the centre of a sort of crowd who watched his motions. Sir Bingo and Captain MacTurk were the first to bustle through it, and to address him with as much politeness as they could command.

'Servant, sir,' mumbled Sir Bingo, extending the right hand of fellowship and reconciliation, ungloved. 'Servant—sorry that anything should have happened between us—very sorry, on my word.'

'No more need be said, sir,' replied Tyrrel; 'the whole is forgotten.'

'Very handsome, indeed—quite the civil thing—hope to meet you often, sir.' And here the knight was silent.

Meanwhile the more verbose captain proceeded, "Och, py Cot, and it was an awfu' mistake, and I could draw the penknife across my finger for having written the word. By my sowl, and I scratched it till I scratched a hole in the

paper. Och! that I should live to do an uncivil thing by a gentleman that had got himself hit in an honourable affair! But you should have written, my dear; for how the devil could we guess that you were so well provided in quarrels that you had to settle two in one day?'

'I was hurt in an unexpected—an accidental manner, Captain MacTurk. I did not write, because there was something in my circumstances at the moment which required secrecy; but I was resolved, the instant I recovered, to put myself to rights in your good opinion.'

'Och! and you have done that,' said the captain, nodding sagaciously; 'for Captain Jekyl, who is a fine child, has put us all up to your honourable conduct. They are pretty boys, these guardsmen, though they may play a little fine sometimes, and think more of themselves than peradventure they need for to do, in comparison with us of the line. But he let us know all about it—and, though he said not a word of a certain fine lord, with his footpad, and his hurt, and what not, yet we all knew how to lay that and that together. And if the law would not right you, and there were bad words between you, why should not two gentlemen right themselves? And as to your being kinsmen, why should not kinsmen behave to each other like men of honour? Only, some say you are father's sons, and that *is* something too near. I had once thoughts of calling out my uncle Dougal myself, for there is no saying where the line should be drawn; but I thought, on the whole, there should be no fighting, as there is no marriage, within the forbidden degrees. As for first cousins—Wheugh!—that's all fair—fire away, Flanigan! But here is my lord, just upon us, like a stag of the first head, and the whole herd behind him.'

Tyrrel stepped forward a little before his officious companions, his complexion rapidly changing into various shades, like that of one who forces himself to approach and touch some animal or reptile for which he entertains that deep disgust and abhorrence which was anciently ascribed to constitutional antipathy. This appearance of constraint put upon himself, with the changes which it produced on his face, was calculated to prejudice him somewhat in the opinion of the spectators, when compared with the steady,

stately, yet, at the same time, easy demeanour of the Earl of Etherington, who was equal to any man in England in the difficult art of putting a good countenance on a bad cause. He met Tyrrel with an air as unembarrassed as it was cold; and, while he paid the courtesy of a formal and distant salutation, he said aloud, 'I presume, Mr. Tyrrel de Martigny, that, since you have not thought fit to avoid this awkward meeting, you are disposed to remember our family connexion so far as to avoid making sport for the good company?'

'You have nothing to apprehend from my passion, Mr. Bulmer,' replied Tyrrel, 'if you can assure yourself against the consequences of your own.'

'I am glad of that,' said the earl, with the same composure, but sinking his voice so as only to be heard by Tyrrel; 'and as we may not again in a hurry hold any communication together, I take the freedom to remind you, that I sent you a proposal of accommodation by my friend, Mr. Jekyl.'

'It was inadmissible,' said Tyrrel—'altogether inadmissible—both from reasons which you may guess, and others which it is needless to detail. I sent you a proposition; think of it well.'

'I will,' replied Lord Etherington, 'when I shall see it supported by those alleged proofs, which I do not believe ever had existence.'

'Your conscience holds another language from your tongue,' said Tyrrel; 'but I disclaim reproaches, and decline altercation. I will let Captain Jekyl know when I have received the papers, which, you say, are essential to your forming an opinion on my proposal. In the meanwhile, do not think to deceive me. I am here for the very purpose of watching and defeating your machinations; and, while I live, be assured they shall never succeed. And now, sir—or my lord—for the titles are in your choice—fare you well.'

'Hold a little,' said Lord Etherington. 'Since we are condemned to shock each other's eyes, it is fit the good company should know what they are to think of us. You are a philosopher, and do not value the opinion of the public—a poor worldling like me is desirous to stand fair

with it. Gentlemen,' he continued, raising his voice, 'Mr. Winterblossom, Captain MacTurk, Mr.—what is his name, Jekyl? Aye, Micklehen—You have, I believe, all some notion, that this gentleman, my near relation, and I, have some undecided claims on each other, which prevent our living upon good terms. We do not mean, however, to disturb you with our family quarrels; and, for my own part, while this gentleman, Mr. Tyrrel, or whatever he may please to call himself, remains a member of this company, my behaviour to him will be the same as to any stranger who may have that advantage. Good morrow to you, sir—Good morning, gentlemen—we all meet at dinner, as usual. Come, Jekyl.'

So saying, he took Jekyl by the arm, and, gently extricating himself from the sort of crowd, walked off, leaving most of the company prepossessed in his favour, by the ease and apparent reasonableness of his demeanour. Sounds of depreciation, forming themselves indistinctly into something like the words 'my eye, and Betty Martin,' did issue from the neckcloth of Sir Bingo, but they were not much attended to; for it had not escaped the observation of the quicksighted gentry at the Well, that the baronet's feelings towards the noble earl were in the inverse ratio of those displayed by Lady Binks, and that, though ashamed to testify, or perhaps incapable of feeling, any anxious degree of jealousy, his temper had been for some time considerably upon the fret; a circumstance concerning which his fair moiety did not think it necessary to give herself any concern.

Meanwhile, the Earl of Etherington walked onward with his confidant, in the full triumph of successful genius.

'You see,' he said, 'Jekyl, that I can turn a corner with any man in England. It was a proper blunder of yours, that you must extricate the fellow from the mist which accident had flung around him—you might as well have published the story of our rencontre at once, for every one can guess it, by laying time, place, and circumstance together; but never trouble your brains for a justification. You marked how I assumed my natural superiority over him—towered up in the full pride of legitimacy—silenced him, even where the good company most do congregate.

This will go to Mowbray through his agent, and will put him still madder on my alliance. I know he looks jealously on my flirtation with a certain lady—the dasher yonder—nothing makes a man sensible of the value of an opportunity, but the chance of losing it.'

'I wish to Heaven you would give up thoughts of Miss Mowbray!' said Jekyl; 'and take Tyrrel's offer, if he has the means of making it good.'

'Aye, if—if. But I am quite sure he has no such rights as he pretends to, and that his papers are all a deception. Why do you put your eye upon me as fixed as if you were searching out some wonderful secret?'

'I wish I knew what to think of your real bona fide belief respecting these documents,' said Jekyl, not a little puzzled by the steady and unembarrassed air of his friend.

'Why, thou most suspicious of coxcombs,' said Etherington, 'what the devil would you have me say to you? Can I, as the lawyers say, prove a negative? or, is it not very possible, that such things may exist, though I have never seen or heard of them? All I can say is, that of all men I am the most interested to deny the existence of such documents; and, therefore, certainly will not admit of it, unless I am compelled to do so by their being produced; nor then either, unless I am at the same time well assured of their authenticity.'

'I cannot blame you for your being hard of faith, my lord,' said Jekyl; 'but still I think if you can cut out with your earldom, and your noble hereditary estate, I would, in your case, pitch Nettlewood to the devil.'

'Yes, as you pitched your own patrimony, Jekyl; but you took care to have the spending of it first. What would *you* give for such an opportunity of piecing your fortunes by marriage? Confess the truth.'

'I might be tempted, perhaps,' said Jekyl, 'in my present circumstances; but if they were what they have been, I should despise an estate that was to be held by petticoat tenure, especially when the lady of the manor was a sickly fantastic girl that hated me, as this Miss Mowbray has the bad taste to hate you.'

'Umph—sickly?—no, no, she is not sickly—she is as healthy as any one in constitution—and, on my word

I think her paleness only renders her more interesting. The last time I saw her, I thought she might have rivalled one of Canova's finest statues.'

'Yes; but she is indifferent to you—you do not love her,' said Jekyl.

'She is anything but indifferent to me,' said the earl; 'she becomes daily more interesting—for her dislike piques me; and besides, she has the insolence openly to defy and contemn me before her brother, and in the eyes of all the world. I have a kind of loving hatred—a sort of hating love for her; in short, thinking upon her is like trying to read a riddle, and makes one make quite as many blunders, and talk just as much nonsense. If ever I have the opportunity, I will make her pay for all her airs.'

'What airs?' said Jekyl.

'Nay, the devil may describe them, for I cannot; but, for example—Since her brother has insisted on her receiving me, or I should rather say on her appearing when I visit Shaws Castle, one would think her invention has toiled in discovering different ways of showing want of respect to me, and dislike to my presence. Instead of dressing herself as a lady should, especially on such occasions, she chooses some fantastic, or old-fashioned, or negligent bedizening, which makes her at least look odd, if it cannot make her ridiculous—such triple tiaras of various-coloured gauze on her head—such pieces of old tapestry, I think, instead of shawls and pelisses—such thick-soled shoes—such tan-leather gloves—mercy upon us, Hal, the very sight of her equipment would drive mad a whole conclave of milliners! Then her postures are so strange—she does so stoop and lollop, as the women call it, so cross her legs and square her arms—were the goddess of grace to look down on her, it would put her to flight for ever!'

'And you are willing to make this awkward, ill-dressed, unmannered dowdy, your countess, Etherington; you, for whose critical eye half the town dress themselves?' said Jekyl.

'It is all a trick, Hal—all an assumed character to get rid of me, to disgust me, to baffle me; but I am not to be had so easily. The brother is driven to despair—he bites his nails, winks, coughs, makes signs, which she always takes

up at cross-purpose. I hope he beats her after I go away; there would be a touch of consolation, were one but certain of that.'

'A very charitable hope, truly, and your present feelings might lead the lady to judge what she may expect after wedlock. But,' added Jekyl, 'cannot you, so skilful in fathoming every mood of the female mind, divine some mode of engaging her in conversation?'

'Conversation!' replied the earl; 'why, ever since the shock of my first appearance was surmounted, she has contrived to vote me a nonentity; and that she may annihilate me completely, she has chosen, of all occupations, that of working a stocking! From what cursed old antediluvian, who lived before the invention of spinning-jennies, she learned this craft, Heaven only knows; but there she sits, with her work pinned to her knee—not the pretty taper silk fabric, with which Jeannette of Amiens coquetted, while Tristram Shandy was observing her progress; but a huge worsted bag, designed for some flat-footed old pauper, with heels like an elephant—And there she squats, counting all the stitches as she works, and refusing to speak, or listen, or look up, under pretence that it disturbs her calculation!'

'An elegant occupation, truly, and I wonder it does not work a cure upon her noble admirer,' said Jekyl.

'Confound her—no—she shall not trick me. And then amid this affectation of vulgar stolidity, there break out such sparkles of exultation, when she thinks she has succeeded in baffling her brother, and in plaguing me, that, by my faith, Hal, I could not tell, were it at my option, whether to kiss or to cuff her.'

'You are determined to go on with this strange affair, then?' said Jekyl.

'On—on—on, my boy! Clara and Nettlewood for ever!' answered the earl. 'Besides, this brother of hers provokes me too—he does not do for me half what he might—what he ought to do. He stands on point of honour, forsooth,—this broken-down horse-jockey, who swallowed my two thousand pounds as a pointer would a pat of butter. I can see he wishes to play fast and loose—has some suspicions, like you, Hal, upon the strength of my right

to my father's titles and estate, as if with the tithe of the Nettlewood property alone, I would not be too good a match for one of his beggarly family. He must scheme, forsooth, this half-baked Scotch cake !—He must hold off and on, and be cautious, and wait the result, and try conclusions with me, this lump of oatmeal dough !—I am much tempted to make an example of him in the course of my proceedings.'

'Why, this is vengeance horrible and dire,' said Jekyl; 'yet I give up the brother to you; he is a conceited coxcomb, and deserves a lesson. But I would fain intercede for the sister.'

'We shall see,' replied the earl; and then suddenly, 'I tell you what it is, Hal; her caprices are so diverting, that I sometimes think, out of mere contradiction, I almost love her; at least, if she would but clear old scores, and forget one unlucky prank of mine, it should be her own fault if I did not make her a happy woman.'

CHAPTER XXXII

A DEATH-BED

It comes—it wrings me in my parting hour,
The long-hid crime—the well-disguised guilt.
Bring me some holy priest to lay the spectre !
Old Play.

The general expectation of the company had been disappointed by the pacific termination of the meeting betwixt the Earl of Etherington and Tyrrel, the anticipation of which had created so deep a sensation. It had been expected that some appalling scene would have taken place; instead of which, each party seemed to acquiesce in a sullen neutrality, and leave the war to be carried on by their lawyers. It was generally understood that the cause was removed out of the courts of Bellona into that of Themis; and although the litigants continued to inhabit the same neighbourhood, and once or twice met at the public walks

or public table, they took no notice of each other, further than by exchanging on such occasions a grave and distant bow.

In the course of two or three days, people ceased to take interest in a feud so coldly conducted ; and if they thought of it at all, it was but to wonder that both the parties should persevere in residing near the spa, and in chilling, with their unsocial behaviour, a party met together for the purposes of health and amusement.

But the brothers, as the reader is aware, however painful their occasional meetings might be, had the strongest reasons to remain in each other's neighbourhood—Lord Etherington to conduct his design upon Miss Mowbray, Tyrrel to disconcert his plan, if possible, and both to await the answer which should be returned by the house in London, who were depositaries of the papers left by the late earl.

Jekyl, anxious to assist his friend as much as possible, made in the meantime a visit to old Touchwood at the Aultoun, expecting to find him as communicative as he had formerly been on the subject of the quarrel betwixt the brothers, and trusting to discover, by dint of address, whence he had derived his information concerning the affairs of the noble house of Etherington. But the confidence which he had been induced to expect on the part of the old traveller was not reposed. Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, as the earl called him, had changed his mind, or was not in the vein of communication. The only proof of his confidence worth mentioning, was his imparting to the young officer a valuable receipt for concocting curry-powder.

Jekyl was therefore reduced to believe that Touchwood, who appeared all his life to be a great intermeddler in other people's matters, had puzzled out the information which he appeared to possess of Lord Etherington's affairs, through some of those obscure sources whence very important secrets do frequently, to the astonishment and confusion of those whom they concern, escape to the public. He thought this the more likely, as Touchwood was by no means critically nice in his society, but was observed to converse as readily with a gentleman's gentleman, as with

the gentleman to whom he belonged, and with a lady's attendant, as with the lady herself. He that will stoop to this sort of society, who is fond of tattle, being at the same time disposed to pay some consideration for gratification of his curiosity, and not over-scrupulous respecting its accuracy, may always command a great quantity of private anecdote. Captain Jekyl naturally enough concluded that this busy old man became in some degree master of other people's affairs by such correspondences as these; and he could himself bear witness to his success in cross-examination, as he had been surprised into an avowal of the rencontre between the brothers by an insidious observation of the said Touchwood. He reported, therefore, to the earl, after this interview, that, on the whole, he thought he had no reason to fear much on the subject of the traveller, who, though he had become acquainted, by some means or other, with some leading facts of his remarkable history, only possessed them in a broken, confused, and desultory manner, insomuch that he seemed to doubt whether the parties in the expected lawsuit were brothers or cousins, and appeared totally ignorant of the facts on which it was to be founded.

It was the next day after this *éclaircissement* on the subject of Touchwood, that Lord Etherington dropped as usual into the bookseller's shop, got his papers, and skimming his eye over the shelf on which lay, till called for, the postponed letters, destined for the Aultoun, saw with a beating heart the smart post-mistress toss amongst them, with an air of sovereign contempt, a pretty large packet, addressed to Francis Tyrrel, Esq., &c. He withdrew his eyes, as if conscious that even to have looked on this important parcel might engender some suspicion of his purpose, or intimate the deep interest which he took in the contents of the missive which was so slightly treated by his friend Mrs. Pott. At this moment the door of the shop opened, and Lady Penelope Penfeather entered, with her eternal *pendante*, the little Miss Digges.

'Have you seen Mr. Mowbray? Has Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's been down this morning? Do you know anything of Mr. Mowbray, Mrs. Pott?' were questions which the lettered lady eagerly huddled on the back of each

other, scarcely giving time to the lady of letters to return a decided negative to all and each of them.

'Mr. Mowbray was not about—was not coming there this morning—his servant had just called for letters and papers, and announced as much.'

'Good Heaven! how unfortunate!' said Lady Penelope, with a deep sigh, and sinking down on one of the little sofas in an attitude of shocking desolation, which called the instant attention of Mr. Pott and his good woman, the first uncorking a small phial of salts, for he was a pharmacopolist as well as a vender of literature and transmitter of letters, and the other hastening for a glass of water. A strong temptation thrilled from Lord Etherington's eyes to his finger-ends. Two steps might have brought him within arm's-length of the unwatched packet, on the contents of which, in all probability, rested the hope and claims of his rival in honour and fortune; and, in the general confusion, was it impossible to possess himself of it unobserved? But no—no—no—the attempt was too dreadfully dangerous to be risked; and, passing from one extreme to another, he felt as if he was incurring suspicion by suffering Lady Penelope to play off her airs of affected distress and anxiety, without seeming to take that interest in them which her rank at least might be supposed to demand. Stung with this apprehension, he hastened to express himself so anxiously on the subject, and to demonstrate so busily his wish to assist her ladyship, that he presently stood committed a great deal further than he had intended. Lady Penelope was infinitely obliged to his lordship—indeed, it was her character in general not to permit herself to be overcome by circumstances; but something had happened, so strange, so embarrassing, so melancholy, that she owned it had quite overcome her—notwithstanding, she had at all times piqued herself on supporting her own distresses better than she was able to suppress her emotions in viewing those of others.

'Could he be of any use?' Lord Etherington asked. 'She had inquired for Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's—his servant was at her ladyship's service, if she chose to send to command his attendance.'

'Oh! no, no!' said Lady Penelope; 'I dare say, my

dear lord, you will answer the purpose a great deal better than Mr. Mowbray—that is, provided you are a justice of peace.'

'A justice of peace!' said Lord Etherington, much surprised; 'I am in the commission unquestionably, but not for any Scotch county.'

'Oh, that does not signify,' said Lady Penelope; 'and if you will trust yourself with me a little way, I will explain to you how you can do one of the most charitable, and kind, and generous things in the world.'

Lord Etherington's delight in the exercise of charity, kindness, and generosity, was not so exuberant as to prevent his devising some means for evading Lady Penelope's request, when, looking through the sash-door, he had a distant glance of his servant Solmes approaching the post office.

I have heard of a sheep-stealer who had rendered his dog so skilful an accomplice in his nefarious traffic, that he used to send him out to commit acts of felony by himself, and had even contrived to impress on the poor cur the caution that he should not, on such occasions, seem even to recognize his master, if they met accidentally.[n] Apparently, Lord Etherington conducted himself upon a similar principle; for he had no sooner a glimpse of his agent, than he seemed to feel the necessity of leaving the stage free for his machinations.

'My servant,' he said, with as much indifference as he could assume, 'will call for my letters—I must attend Lady Penelope;' and, instantly proffering his services as justice of the peace, or in whatever other quality she chose to employ them, he hastily presented his arm, and scarce gave her ladyship time to recover from her state of languor to the necessary degree of activity, ere he hurried her from the shop; and, with her thin hatchet-face chattering close to his ear, her yellow and scarlet feathers crossing his nose, her lean right honourable arm hooking his elbow, he braved the suppressed titters and sneers of all the younger women whom he met as they traversed the parade. One glance of intelligence, though shot at a distance, passed betwixt his lordship and Solmes, as the former left the public walk under the guidance of Lady Penelope, his limbs indeed

obeying her pleasure, and his ears dinned with her attempts to explain the business in question, but his mind totally indifferent where he was going, or ignorant on what purpose, and exclusively occupied with the packet in Mrs. Pott's heap of postponed letters, and its probable fate.

At length, an effort of recollection made Lord Etherington sensible that his abstraction must seem strange, and, as his conscience told him, even suspicious, in the eyes of his companion; putting, therefore, the necessary degree of constraint upon himself, he expressed, for the first time, curiosity to know where their walk was to terminate. It chanced, that this was precisely the question which he needed not to have asked, if he had paid but the slightest attention to the very voluble communications of her ladyship, which had all turned upon this subject.

'Now, my dear lord,' she said, 'I must believe you lords of the creation think us poor simple women the vainest fools alive. I have told you how much pain it costs me to speak about my little charities, and yet you come to make me tell you the whole story over again. But I hope, after all, your lordship is not surprised at what I have thought it my duty to do in this sad affair—perhaps I have listened too much to the dictates of my own heart, which are apt to be so deceitful.'

On the watch to get at something explanatory, yet afraid, by demanding it directly, to show that the previous tide of narrative and pathos had been lost on an inattentive ear, Lord Etherington could only say that Lady Penelope could not err in acting according to the dictates of her own judgement.

Still the compliment had not sauce enough for the lady's sated palate; so, like a true glutton of praise, she began to help herself with the soup-ladle.

'Ah! judgement?—how is it you men know us so little, that you think we can pause to weigh sentiment in the balance of judgement?—that is expecting rather too much from us poor victims of our feelings. So that you must really hold me excused if I forgot the errors of this guilty and unhappy creature, when I looked upon her wretchedness—Not that I would have my little friend, Miss Digges, or your lordship, suppose that I am capable of palliating

the fault, while I pity the poor, miserable sinner. Oh, no —Walpole's verses express beautifully what one ought to feel on such occasions—

> 'For never was the gentle breast
> Insensible to human woes;
> Feeling, though firm, it melts distress'd
> For weaknesses it never knows.'

'Most accursed of all *précieuses*,' thought his lordship, 'when wilt thou, amidst all thy chatter, utter one word sounding like sense or information?'

But Lady Penelope went on—'If you knew, my lord, how I lament my limited means on those occasions! but I have gathered something among the good people at the Well. I asked that selfish wretch, Winterblossom, to walk down with me to view her distress, and the heartless beast told me he was afraid of infection! infection from a puer—puerperal fever! I should not perhaps pronounce the word, but science is of no sex—however, I have always used thieves' vinegar essence, and never have gone farther than the threshold.'

Whatever were Etherington's faults, he did not want charity, so far as it consists in giving alms.

'I am sorry,' he said, taking out his purse, 'your ladyship should not have applied to me.'

'Pardon me, my lord, we only beg from our friends; and your lordship is so constantly engaged with Lady Binks, that we have rarely the pleasure of seeing you in what I call *my* little circle.'

Lord Etherington, without further answer, tendered a couple of guineas, and observed, that the poor woman should have medical attendance.

'Why, so I say,' answered Lady Penelope; 'and I asked the brute Quackleben, who, I am sure, owes me some gratitude, to go and see her; but the sordid monster answered, "Who was to pay him?" He grows every day more intolerable, now that he seems sure of marrying that fat blowsy widow. He could not, I am sure, expect that I—out of my pittance—And besides, my lord, is there not a law that the parish, or the county, or the something or other, shall pay for physicking the poor?'

'We will find means to secure the doctor's attendance,'

said Lord Etherington; 'and I believe my best way will be to walk back to the Well, and send him to wait on the patient. I am afraid I can be of little use to a poor woman in a childbed fever.'

'Puerperal, my lord, puerperal,' said Lady Penelope, in a tone of correction.

'In a puerperal fever, then,' said Lord Etherington; 'why, what can I do to help her?'

'Oh! my lord, you have forgotten that this Annie Heggie, that I told you of, came here with one child in her arms —and another—in short, about to become a mother again—and settled herself in this miserable hut I told you of—and some people think the minister should have sent her to her own parish; but he is a strange, soft-headed, sleepy sort of man, not over active in his parochial duties. However, there she settled, and there was something about her quite beyond the style of a common pauper, my lord —not at all the disgusting sort of person that you give a sixpence to while you look another way—but some one that seemed to have seen better days—one that, as Shakespeare says, could a tale unfold—though, indeed, I have never thoroughly learned her history—only that to-day, as I called to know who she was, and sent my maid into her hut with some trifle, not worth mentioning, I find there is something hangs about her mind concerning the Mowbray family here of Saint Ronan's—and my woman says the poor creature is dying, and is raving either for Mr. Mowbray or for some magistrate to receive a declaration; and so I have given you the trouble to come with me, that we may get out of the poor creature, if possible, whatever she has got to say. I hope it is not murder—I hope not—though young St. Ronan's has been a strange, wild, daring, thoughtless creature—*sgherro insigne*, as the Italian says. But here is the hut, my lord —pray, walk in.'

The mention of St. Ronan's family, and of a secret relating to them, banished the thoughts which Lord Etherington began to entertain of leaving Lady Penelope to execute her works of devoted charity without his assistance. It was now with an interest equal to her own that he stood before a most miserable hut, where the unfortunate female, her distresses not greatly relieved by Lady Penelope's

ostentatious bounty, had resided both previous to her confinement, and since that event had taken place, with an old woman, one of the parish poor, whose miserable dole the minister had augmented that she might have some means of assisting the stranger.

Lady Penelope lifted the latch and entered, after a momentary hesitation, which proceeded from a struggle betwixt her fear of infection, and her eager curiosity to know something, she could not guess what, that might affect the Mowbrays in their honour or fortunes. The latter soon prevailed, and she entered, followed by Lord Etherington. The lady, like other comforters of the cabins of the poor, proceeded to rebuke the grumbling old woman, for want of order and cleanliness—censured the food which was provided for the patient, and inquired particularly after the wine she had left to make caudle with. The crone was not so dazzled with Lady Penelope's dignity or bounty as to endure her reprimand with patience. 'They that had their bread to won wi' ae arm,' she said, for the other hung powerless by her side, 'had mair to do than to soop houses; if her leddyship wad let her ain idle quean of a lass take the besom, she might make the house as clean as she liked; and madam wad be a' the better of the exercise, and wad hae done, at least, ae turn of wark at the week's end.'

'Do you hear the old hag, my lord?' said Lady Penelope. 'Well, the poor are horrid ungrateful wretches. And the wine, dame—the wine?'

'The wine!—there was hardly half a mutchkin, and puir, thin, fushionless skink it was—the wine was drank out, ye may swear—we didna fling it ower our shouther—if ever we were to get good o't, it was by taking it naked, and no wi' your sugar and your slaisters—I wish, for ane, I had ne'er kend the sour smack o't. If the bedral hadna gien me a drap of usquebaugh, I might e'en hae died of your leddyship's liquor, for——'

Lord Etherington here interrupted the grumbling crone, thrusting some silver into her grasp, and at the same time begging her to be silent. The hag weighed the crown-piece in her hand, and crawled to her chimney-corner, muttering as she went,—'This is something like—this is something like—no like rinning into the house and out of the house,

and geeing orders, like mistress and mair, and then a puir shilling again Saturday at e'en.'

So saying, she sat down to her wheel, and seized, while she spun, her jet-black cutty pipe, from which she soon sent such clouds of vile mundungus vapour as must have cleared the premises of Lady Penelope, had she not been strong in purpose to share the expected confession of the invalid. As for Miss Digges, she coughed, sneezed, retched, and finally ran out of the cottage, declaring she could not live in such a smoke, if it were to hear twenty sick women's last speeches; and that, besides, she was sure to know all about it from Lady Penelope, if it was ever so little worth telling over again.

Lord Etherington was now standing beside the miserable flockbed, in which lay the poor patient, distracted, in what seemed to be her dying moments, with the peevish clamour of the elder infant, to which she could only reply by low moans, turning her looks as well as she could from its ceaseless whine, to the other side of her wretched couch, where lay the unlucky creature to which she had last given birth; its shivering limbs imperfectly covered with a blanket, its little features already swollen and bloated, and its eyes scarce open, apparently insensible to the evils of a state from which it seemed about to be speedily released.

'You are very ill, poor woman,' said Lord Etherington; 'I am told you desire a magistrate.'

'It was Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's—whom I desired to see—John Mowbray of Saint Ronan's—the lady promised to bring him here.'

'I am not Mowbray of Saint Ronan's,' said Lord Etherington; 'but I am a justice of peace, and a member of the legislature—I am, moreover, Mr. Mowbray's particular friend, if I can be of use to you in any of these capacities.'

The poor woman remained long silent, and when she spoke it was doubtfully.

'Is my Lady Penelope Penfeather there?' she said, straining her darkened eyes.

'Her ladyship is present, and within hearing,' said Lord Etherington.

'My case is the worse,' answered the dying woman, for so she seemed, 'if I must communicate such a secret

as mine to a man of whom I know nothing, and a woman of whom I only know that she wants discretion.'

'I—I want discretion!' said Lady Penelope; but at a signal from Lord Etherington she seemed to restrain herself; nor did the sick woman, whose powers of observation were greatly impaired, seem to be aware of the interruption. She spoke, notwithstanding her situation, with an intelligible and even emphatic voice; her manner in a great measure betraying the influence of the fever, and her tone and language seeming much superior to her most miserable condition.

'I am not the abject creature which I seem,' she said; 'at least, I was not born to be so. I wish I *were* that utter abject! I wish I were a wretched pauper of the lowest class—a starving vagabond—a wifeless mother—ignorance and insensibility would make me bear my lot like the outcast animal that dies patiently on the side of the common, where it has been half-starved during its life. But I—but I—born and bred to better things, have not lost the memory of them, and they make my present condition—my shame—my poverty—my infamy—the sight of my dying babes—the sense that my own death is coming fast on—they make these things a foretaste of hell!'

Lady Penelope's self-conceit and affectation were broken down by this fearful exordium. She sobbed, shuddered, and for once perhaps in her life, felt the real, not the assumed necessity, of putting her handkerchief to her eyes. Lord Etherington also was moved.

'Good woman,' he said, 'as far as relieving your personal wants can mitigate your distress, I will see that is fully performed, and that your poor children are attended to.'

'May God bless you!' said the poor woman, with a glance at the wretched forms beside her; 'and may you,' she added, after a momentary pause, 'deserve the blessing of God, for it is bestowed in vain on those who are unworthy of it.'

Lord Etherington felt, perhaps, a twinge of conscience; for he said, something hastily, 'Pray go on, good woman, if you really have anything to communicate to me as a magistrate—it is time your condition was somewhat mended, and I will cause you to be cared for directly.'

'Stop yet a moment,' she said; 'let me unload my conscience before I go hence, for no earthly relief will long avail to prolong my time here. I was well born, the more my present shame! well educated, the greater my present guilt! I was always, indeed, poor, but I felt not of the ills of poverty. I only thought of it when my vanity demanded idle and expensive gratification, for real wants I knew none. I was companion of a young lady of higher rank than my own, my relative, however, and one of such exquisite kindness of disposition, that she treated me as a sister, and would have shared with me all that she had on earth—I scarce think I can go further with my story! something rises to my throat when I recollect how I rewarded her sisterly love! I was elder than Clara—I should have directed her reading, and confirmed her understanding; but my own bent led me to peruse only works which, though they burlesque nature, are seductive to the imagination. We read these follies together, until we had fashioned out for ourselves a little world of romance, and prepared ourselves for a maze of adventures. Clara's imaginations were as pure as those of angels; mine were—but it is unnecessary to tell them. The fiend, always watchful, presented a tempter at the moment when it was most dangerous.'

She paused here, as if she found difficulty in expressing herself; and Lord Etherington, turning, with great appearance of interest, to Lady Penelope, began to inquire, 'Whether it were quite agreeable to her ladyship to remain any longer an ear-witness of this unfortunate's confession? —it seems to be verging on some things—things that it might be unpleasant for your ladyship to hear.'

'I was just forming the same opinion, my lord, and, to say truth, was about to propose to your lordship to withdraw, and leave me alone with the poor woman. My sex will make her necessary communications the more frank in your lordship's absence.'

'True, madam; but then I am called here in my capacity of a magistrate.'

'Hush!' said Lady Penelope; 'she speaks.'

'They say every woman that yields, makes herself a slave to her seducer; but I sold my liberty not to a man, but a demon! He made me serve him in his vile schemes

against my friend and patroness—and oh! he found in me an agent too willing, from mere envy, to destroy the virtue which I had lost myself. Do not listen to me any more—Go, and leave me to my fate; I am the most detestable wretch that ever lived—detestable to myself worst of all, because even in my penitence there is a secret whisper that tells me that, were I as I have been, I would again act over all the wickedness I have done, and much worse. Oh! for Heaven's assistance, to crush the wicked thought!'

She closed her eyes, folded her emaciated hands, and held them upwards in the attitude of one who prays internally; presently the hands separated, and fell gently down on her miserable couch; but her eyes did not open, nor was there the slightest sign of motion on the features. Lady Penelope shrieked faintly, hid her eyes, and hurried back from the bed, while Lord Etherington, his looks darkening with a complication of feelings, remained gazing on the poor woman, as if eager to discern whether the spark of life was totally extinct. Her grim old assistant hurried to the bedside, with some spirits in a broken glass.

'Have ye no had pennyworths for your charity?' she said, in spiteful scorn. 'Ye buy the very life o' us wi' your shillings and sixpences, your groats and your boddles—ye hae gar'd the puir wretch speak till she swarfs, and now ye stand as if ye never saw a woman in a dwam before. Let me till her wi' the dram—mony words mickle drought, ye ken—Stand out o' my gate, my leddy, if sae be that ye are a leddy; there is little use of the like of you when there is death in the pot.'

Lady Penelope, half affronted, but still more frightened by the manners of the old hag, now gladly embraced Lord Etherington's renewed offer to escort her from the hut. He left it not, however, without bestowing an additional gratuity on the old woman, who received it with a whining benediction.

'The Almighty guide your course through the troubles of this wicked warld—and the muckle deevil blaw wind in your sails,' she added, in her natural tone, as the guests vanished from her miserable threshold—'A wheen cork-headed, barmy-brained gowks! that wunna let puir folk sae muckle as die in quiet, wi' their sossings and their soopings.'[n]

'This poor creature's declaration,' said Lord Etherington to Lady Penelope, 'seems to refer to matters which the law has nothing to do with, and which, perhaps, as they seem to implicate the peace of a family of respectability, and the character of a young lady, we ought to inquire no further after.'

'I differ from your lordship,' said Lady Penelope;

THE VISIT TO HANNAH IRWIN

'I differ extremely—I suppose you guess whom her discourse touched upon?'

'Indeed, your ladyship does my acuteness by far too much honour.'

'Did she not mention a Christian name?' said Lady Penelope; 'your lordship is strangely dull this morning?'

'A Christian name? No, none that I heard—yes, she said something about—a Catherine, I think it was.'

'Catherine?' answered the lady; 'No, my lord, it was Clara—rather a rare name in this country, and belonging, I think, to a young lady of whom your lordship should

know something, unless your evening flirtations with Lady Binks have blotted entirely out of your memory your morning visits to Shaws Castle. You are a bold man, my lord. I would advise you to include Mrs. Blower among the objects of your attention, and then you will have maid, wife, and widow upon your list.'

'Upon my honour, your ladyship is too severe,' said Lord Etherington; 'you surround yourself every evening with all that is clever and accomplished among the people here, and then you ridicule a poor secluded monster, who dare not approach your charmed circle, because he seeks for some amusement elsewhere. This is to tyrannize and not to reign—it is Turkish despotism!'

'Ah! my lord, I know you well, my lord,' said Lady Penelope—'Sorry would your lordship be, had you not power to render yourself welcome to any circle which you may please to approach.'

'That is to say,' answered the lord, 'you will pardon me, if I intrude on your ladyship's coterie this evening?'

'There is no society which Lord Etherington can think of frequenting, where he will not be a welcome guest.'

'I will plead then at once my pardon and privilege this evening—And now' (speaking as if he had succeeded in establishing some confidence with her ladyship), 'what do you really think of this blind story?'

'Oh, I must believe it concerns Miss Mowbray. She was always an odd girl—something about her I could never endure—a sort of effrontery—that is, perhaps, a harsh word, but a kind of assurance—an air of confidence—so that though I kept on a footing with her because she was an orphan girl of good family, and because I really knew nothing positively bad of her, yet she sometimes absolutely shocked me.'

'Your ladyship, perhaps, would not think it right to give publicity to the story? at least till you know exactly what it is,' said the earl, in a tone of suggestion.

'Depend upon it, that it is quite the worst, the very worst—You heard the woman say that she had exposed Clara to ruin—and you know she must have meant Clara Mowbray, because she was so anxious to tell the story to her brother, St. Ronan's.'

'Very true—I did not think of that,' answered Lord Etherington: 'still it would be hard on the poor girl if it should get abroad.'

'Oh, it will never get abroad for me,' said Lady Penelope; 'I would not tell the very wind of it. But then I cannot meet Miss Mowbray as formerly—I have a station in life to maintain, my lord—and I am under the necessity of being select in my society—it is a duty I owe the public, if it were even not my own inclination.'

'Certainly, my Lady Penelope,' said Lord Etherington; 'but then consider, that, in a place where all eyes are necessarily observant of your ladyship's behaviour, the least coldness on your part to Miss Mowbray—and, after all, we have nothing like assurance of anything being wrong there—would ruin her with the company here, and with the world at large.'

'Oh! my lord,' answered Lady Penelope, 'as for the truth of the story, I have some private reasons of my own for "holding the strange tale devoutly true"; for I had a mysterious hint from a very worthy, but a very singular man (your lordship knows how I adore originality), the clergyman of the parish, who made me aware there was something wrong about Miss Clara—something that—your lordship will excuse my speaking more plainly,—Oh, no! —I fear—I fear it is all too true—You know Mr. Cargill, I suppose, my lord?'

'Yes—no—I—I think I have seen him,' said Lord Etherington. 'But how came the lady to make the parson her father-confessor?—they have no auricular confession in the Kirk—it must have been with the purpose of marriage, I presume—let us hope that it took place—perhaps it really was so—did he, Cargill—the minister, I mean—say anything of such a matter?'

'Not a word—not a word—I see where you are, my lord; you would put a good face on't.

> 'They call'd it marriage, by that specious name
> To veil the crime and sanctify the shame.

Queen Dido for that. How the clergyman came into the secret I cannot tell—he is a very close man. But I know he will not hear of Miss Mowbray being married to any one, unquestionably because he knows that, in doing so,

she would introduce disgrace into some honest family—and, truly, I am much of his mind, my lord.'

'Perhaps Mr. Cargill may know the lady is privately married already,' said the earl; 'I think that is the more natural inference, begging your ladyship's pardon for presuming to differ in opinion.'

Lady Penelope seemed determined not to take this view of the case.

'No, no—no, I tell you,' she replied; 'she cannot be married, for if she were married, how could the poor wretch say that she was ruined? You know there is a difference betwixt ruin and marriage.'

'Some people are said to have found them synonymous, Lady Penelope,' answered the earl.

'You are smart on me, my lord; but still, in common parlance, when we say a woman is ruined, we mean quite the contrary of her being married—it is impossible for me to be more explicit upon such a topic, my lord.'

'I defer to your ladyship's better judgement,' said Lord Etherington. 'I only entreat you to observe a little caution on this business—I will make the strictest inquiries of this woman, and acquaint you with the result; and I hope, out of regard to the respectable family of St. Ronan's, your ladyship will be in no hurry to intimate anything to Miss Mowbray's prejudice.'

'I certainly am no person to spread scandal, my lord,' answered the lady, drawing herself up; 'at the same time, I must say, the Mowbrays have little claim on me for forbearance. I am sure I was the first person to bring this spa into fashion, which has been a matter of such consequence to their estate; and yet Mr. Mowbray set himself against me, my lord, in every possible sort of way, and encouraged the underbred people about him to behave very strangely. There was the business of building the Belvedere, which he would not permit to be done out of the stock-purse of the company, because I had given the workmen the plan and the orders—and then, about the tea-room—and the hour for beginning dancing—and about the subscription for Mr. Rymour's new Tale of Chivalry—in short, I owe no consideration to Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's.'

'But the poor young lady,' said Lord Etherington.

'Oh! the poor young lady?—the poor young lady can be as saucy as a rich young lady, I promise you. There was a business in which she used me scandalously, Lord Etherington—it was about a very trifling matter—a shawl. Nobody minds dress less than I do, my lord; I thank heaven my thoughts turn upon very different topics—but it is in trifles that disrespect and unkindness are shown; and I have had a full share of both from Miss Clara, besides a good deal of impertinence from her brother upon the same subject.'

'There is but one way remains,' thought the earl, as they approached the spa, 'and that is to work on the fears of this d—d vindictive blue-stocking'd wild-cat. Your ladyship,' he said aloud, 'is aware what severe damages have been awarded in late cases where something approaching to scandal has been traced to ladies of consideration—the privileges of the tea-table have been found insufficient to protect some fair critics against the consequences of too frank and liberal animadversion upon the characters of their friends. So pray, remember, that as yet we know very little on this subject.'

Lady Penelope loved money, and feared the law; and this hint, fortified by her acquaintance with Mowbray's love of his sister, and his irritable and revengeful disposition, brought her in a moment much nearer the temper in which Lord Etherington wished to leave her. She protested, that no one could be more tender than she of the fame of the unfortunate, even supposing their guilt was fully proved—promised caution on the subject of the pauper's declaration, and hoped Lord Etherington would join her tea-party early in the evening, as she wished to make him acquainted with one or two of her protégés, whom, she was sure, his lordship would find deserving of his advice and countenance. Being by this time at the door of her own apartment, her ladyship took leave of the earl with a most gracious smile.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DISAPPOINTMENT

On the lee-beam lies the land, boys,
See all clear to reef each course;
Let the fore-sheet go, don't mind, boys,
Though the weather should be worse.
The Storm

'It darkens round me like a tempest,' thought Lord Etherington, as, with slow step, folded arms, and his white hat slouched over his brows, he traversed the short interval of space betwixt his own apartments and those of the Lady Penelope. In a buck of the old school, one of Congreve's men of wit and pleasure about town, this would have been a departure from character; but the present fine man does not derogate from his quality, even by exhibiting all the moody and gentlemanlike solemnity of Master Stephen. So, Lord Etherington was at liberty to carry on his reflections, without attracting observation. 'I have put a stopper into the mouth of that old vinegar-cruet of quality, but the acidity of her temper will soon dissolve the charm. And what to do?'

As he looked round him, he saw his trusty valet Solmes, who, touching his hat with due respect, said, as he passed him, 'Your lordship's letters are in your private dispatch-box.'

Simple as these words were, and indifferent the tone in which they were spoken, their import made Lord Etherington's heart bound as if his fate had depended on the accents. He intimated no further interest in the communication, however, than to desire Solmes to be below, in case he should ring; and with these words entered his apartment, and barred and bolted the door, even before he looked on the table where his dispatch-box was placed.

Lord Etherington had, as is usual, one key to the box which held his letters, his confidential servant being entrusted with the other; so that, under the protection of a patent lock, his dispatches escaped all risk of being

tampered with, a precaution not altogether unnecessary on the part of those who frequent hotels and lodging-houses.

'By your leave, Mr. Bramah,' said the earl, as he applied the key, jesting, as it were, with his own agitation, as he would have done with that of a third party. The lid was raised, and displayed the packet, the appearance and superscription of which had attracted his observation but a short while since in the post office. *Then* he would have given much to be possessed of the opportunity which was now in his power; but many pause on the brink of a crime, who have contemplated it at a distance without scruple. Lord Etherington's first impulse had led him to poke the fire; and he held in his hand the letter which he was more than half tempted to commit, without even breaking the seal, to the fiery element. But, though sufficiently familiarized with guilt, he was not as yet acquainted with it in its basest shapes—he had not yet acted with meanness, or at least with what the world terms such. He had been a duellist, the manners of the age authorized it; a libertine, the world excused it to his youth and condition; a bold and successful gambler, for that quality he was admired and envied; and a thousand other inaccuracies, to which these practices and habits lead, were easily slurred over in a man of quality, with fortune and spirit to support his rank. But his present meditated act was of a different kind. Tell it not in Bond Street, whisper it not on St. James's pavement!—it amounted to an act of petty larceny, for which the code of honour would admit of no composition.

Lord Etherington, under the influence of these recollections, stood for a few minutes suspended. But the devil always finds logic to convince his followers. He recollected the wrong done to his mother, and to himself, her offspring, to whom his father had, in the face of the whole world, imparted the hereditary rights, of which he was now, by a posthumous deed, endeavouring to deprive the memory of the one, and the expectations of the other. Surely, the right being his own, he had a full title, by the most effectual means, whatever such means might be, to repel all attacks on that right, and even destroy, if necessary, the documents by which his enemies were prosecuting their unjust plans against his honour and interest.

This reasoning prevailed, and Lord Etherington again held the devoted packet above the flames ; when it occurred to him, that, his resolution being taken, he ought to carry it into execution as effectually as possible ; and to do so, it was necessary to know that the packet actually contained the papers which he was desirous to destroy.

Never did a doubt arise in juster time ; for no sooner had the seal burst, and the envelope rustled under his fingers, than he perceived to his utter consternation that he held in his hand only the copies of the deeds for which Francis Tyrrel had written, the originals of which he had too sanguinely concluded would be forwarded according to his requisition. A letter from a partner of the house with which they were deposited, stated that they had not felt themselves at liberty, in the absence of the head of their firm, to whom these papers had been committed, to part with them even to Mr. Tyrrel, though they had proceeded so far as to open the parcel, and now transmitted to him formal copies of the papers contained in it, which, they presumed, would serve Mr. Tyrrel's purpose for consulting counsel, or the like. They themselves, in a case of so much delicacy, and in the absence of their principal partner, were determined to retain the originals, unless called to produce them in a court of justice.

With a solemn imprecation on the formality and absurdity of the writer, Lord Etherington let the letter of advice drop from his hand into the fire, and throwing himself into a chair, passed his hand across his eyes, as if their very power of sight had been blighted by what he had read. His title, and his paternal fortune, which he thought but an instant before might be rendered unchallengeable by a single movement of his hand, seemed now on the verge of being lost for ever. His rapid recollection failed not to remind him of what was less known to the world, that his early and profuse expenditure had greatly dilapidated his maternal fortune ; and that the estate of Nettlewood, which five minutes ago he only coveted as a wealthy man desires increase of his store, must now be acquired if he would avoid being a poor and embarrassed spendthrift. To impede his possessing himself of this property, fate had restored to the scene the penitent of the morning, who,

as he had too much reason to believe, was returned to this neighbourhood to do justice to Clara Mowbray, and who was not unlikely to put the whole story of the marriage on its right footing. She, however, might be got rid of; and it might still be possible to hurry Miss Mowbray, by working on her fears, or through the agency of her brother, into a union with him while he still preserved the title of Lord Etherington. This, therefore, he resolved to secure, if effort or if intrigue could carry the point; nor was it the least consideration that, should he succeed, he would obtain over Tyrrel, his successful rival, such a triumph as would be sufficient to embitter the tranquillity of his whole life.

In a few minutes his rapid and contriving invention had formed a plan for securing the sole advantage which seemed to remain open for him; and conscious that he had no time to lose, he entered immediately upon the execution.

The bell summoned Solmes to his lordship's apartment, when the earl, as coolly as if he had hoped to dupe his experienced valet by such an assertion, said, 'You have brought me a packet designed for some man at the Aultoun —let it be sent to him. Stay, I will re-seal it first.'

He accordingly re-sealed the packet, containing all the writings, excepting the letter of advice (which he had burnt), and gave it to the valet, with the caution, 'I wish you would not make such blunders in future.'

'I beg your lordship's pardon. I will take better care again—thought it was addressed to your lordship.'

So answered Solmes, too knowing to give the least intelligence, far less to remind the earl that his own directions had occasioned the mistake of which he complained.

'Solmes,' continued the earl, 'you need not mention your blunder at the post office; it would only occasion tattle in this idle place, but be sure that the gentleman has his letter. And, Solmes, I see Mr. Mowbray walk across—ask him to dine with me to-day at five. I have a headache, and cannot face the clamour of the savages who feed at the public table. And—let me see—make my compliments to Lady Penelope Penfeather. I will certainly have the honour of waiting on her ladyship this evening to tea, agreeably to her very boring invitation received; write her a proper

card, and word it your own way. Bespeak dinner for two, and see you have some of that batch of Burgundy.'

The servant was retiring, when his master added, 'Stay a moment—I have a more important business than I have yet mentioned. Solmes, you have managed devilish ill about the woman Irwin!'

'I, my lord?' answered Solmes.

'Yes, you, sir—did you not tell me she had gone to the West Indies with a friend of yours, and did not I give them a couple of hundred pounds for passage-money?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the valet.

'Aye, but now it proves *no*, my lord,' said Lord Etherington; 'for she has found her way back to this country in miserable plight—half-starved, and, no doubt, willing to do or say anything for a livelihood. How has this happened?'

'Biddulph must have taken her cash, and turned her loose, my lord,' answered Solmes, as if he had been speaking of the most commonplace transaction in the world; 'but I know the woman's nature so well, and am so much master of her history, that I can carry her off the country in twenty-four hours, and place her where she will never think of returning, provided your lordship can spare me so long.'

'About it directly, but I can tell you that you will find the woman in a very penitential humour, and very ill in health to boot.'

'I am sure of my game,' answered Solmes; 'with submission to your lordship, I think if death and her good angel had hold of one of that woman's arms, the devil and I could make a shift to lead her away by the other.'

'Away and about it, then,' said Etherington. 'But, hark ye, Solmes, be kind to her, and see all her wants relieved. I have done her mischief enough, though nature and the devil had done half the work to my hand.'

Solmes at length was permitted to withdraw to execute his various commissions, with an assurance that his services would not be wanted for the next twenty-four hours.

'Soh!' said the earl, as his agent withdrew, 'there is a spring put in motion, which, well oiled, will move the whole machine. And here, in lucky time, comes Harry Jekyl—I hear his whistle on the stairs. There is a silly

lightness of heart about that fellow which I envy, while I despise it; but he is welcome now, for I want him.'

Jekyl entered accordingly, and broke out with, 'I am glad to see one of your fellows laying a cloth for two in your parlour, Etherington. I was afraid you were going down among these confounded bores again to-day.'

'*You* are not to be one of the two, Hal,' answered Lord Etherington.

'No?—then I may be a third, I hope, if not second?'

'Neither first, second, nor third, Captain. The truth is, I want a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's,' replied the earl; 'and, besides, I have to beg the very particular favour of you to go again to that fellow Martigny. It is time that he should produce his papers, if he has any—of which, for one, I do not believe a word. He has had ample time to hear from London; and I think I have delayed long enough in an important matter upon his bare assertion.'

'I cannot blame your impatience,' said Jekyl, 'and I will go on your errand instantly. As you waited on my advice, I am bound to find an end to your suspense. At the same time, if the man is not possessed of such papers as he spoke of, I must own he is happy in a command of consummate assurance which might set up the whole roll of attorneys.'

'You will be soon able to judge of that,' said Lord Etherington; 'and now, off with you. Why do you look at me so anxiously?'

'I cannot tell. I have strange forebodings about this *tête-à-tête* with Mowbray. You should spare him, Etherington: he is not your match—wants both judgement and temper.'

'Tell him so, Jekyl,' answered the earl, 'and his proud Scotch stomach will be up in an instant, and he will pay you with a shot for your pains. Why, he thinks himself cock of the walk, this strutting bantam, notwithstanding the lesson I gave him before. And what do you think?—he has the impudence to talk about my attentions to Lady Binks as inconsistent with the prosecution of my suit to his sister! Yes, Hal, this awkward Scotch laird, that has scarce tact enough to make love to a ewe-milker, or, at

best, to some daggletailed soubrette, has the assurance to start himself as my rival ! '

' Then, good-night to Saint Ronan's !—this will be a fatal dinner to him. Etherington, I know by that laugh you are bent on mischief. I have a great mind to give him a hint.'

' I wish you would,' answered the earl ; ' it would all turn to my account.'

' Do you defy me ? Well, if I meet him, I will put him on his guard.'

The friends parted ; and it was not long ere Jekyl encountered Mowbray on one of the public walks.

' You dine with Etherington to-day ? ' said the captain. ' Forgive me, Mr. Mowbray, if I say one single word—Beware.'

' Of what should I beware, Captain Jekyl,' answered Mowbray, ' when I dine with a friend of your own, and a man of honour ? '

' Certainly, Lord Etherington is both, Mr. Mowbray ; but he loves play, and is too hard for most people.'

' I thank you for your hint, Captain Jekyl. I am a raw Scottishman, it is true ; but yet I know a thing or two. Fair play is always presumed amongst gentlemen ; and that taken for granted, I have the vanity to think I need no one's caution on the subject, not even Captain Jekyl's, though his experience must needs be so much superior to mine.'

' In that case, sir,' said Jekyl, bowing coldly, ' I have no more to say, and I hope there is no harm done. Conceited coxcomb ! ' he added, mentally, as they parted, ' how truly did Etherington judge of him, and what an ass was I to intermeddle ! I hope Etherington will strip him of every feather.'

He pursued his walk in quest of Tyrrel, and Mowbray proceeded to the apartments of the earl, in a temper of mind well suited to the purposes of the latter, who judged of his disposition accurately when he permitted Jekyl to give his well-meant warning. To be supposed, by a man of acknowledged fashion, so decidedly inferior to his antagonist—to be considered as an object of compassion, and made the subject of a good-boy warning, was gall and bitterness to his proud spirit, which, the more that he felt a conscious inferiority in the arts which they all cultivated, struggled the more to preserve the footing of at least apparent equality.

Since the first memorable party at piquet, Mowbray had never hazarded his luck with Lord Etherington, except for trifling stakes ; but his conceit led him to suppose that he now fully understood his play, and, agreeably to the practice of those who have habituated themselves to gambling, he had, every now and then, felt a yearning to try for his revenge. He wished also to be out of Lord Etherington's debt, feeling galled under a sense of pecuniary obligation, which hindered his speaking his mind to him fully upon the subject of his flirtation with Lady Binks, which he justly considered as an insult to his family, considering the footing on which the earl seemed desirous to stand with Clara Mowbray. From these obligations a favourable evening might free him, and Mowbray was, in fact, indulging in a waking dream to this purpose, when Jekyl interrupted him. His untimely warning only excited a spirit of contradiction, and a determination to show the adviser how little he was qualified to judge of his talents ; and in this humour, his ruin, which was the consequence of that afternoon, was far from even seeming to be the premeditated, or even the voluntary work of the Earl of Etherington.

On the contrary, the victim himself was the first to propose play—deep play—double stakes ; while Lord Etherington, on the other hand, often proposed to diminish their game, or to break off entirely ; but it was always with an affectation of superiority, which only stimulated Mowbray to further and more desperate risks ; and, at last, when Mowbray became his debtor to an overwhelming amount (his circumstances considered), the earl threw down the cards, and declared he should be too late for Lady Penelope's tea-party, to which he was positively engaged.

'Will you not give me my revenge ?' said Mowbray, taking up the cards, and shuffling them with fierce anxiety.

'Not now, Mowbray ; we have played too long already : you have lost too much—more than perhaps is convenient for you to pay.'

Mowbray gnashed his teeth, in spite of his resolution to maintain an exterior, at least, of firmness.

'You can take your time, you know,' said the earl ; 'a note of hand will suit me as well as the money.'

'No, by G—l!' answered Mowbray, 'I will not be so

taken in a second time. I had better have sold myself to the devil than to your lordship. I have never been my own man since.'

'These are not very kind expressions, Mowbray,' said the earl; 'you *would* play, and they that will play must expect sometimes to lose'——

'And they who win will expect to be paid,' said Mowbray, breaking in. 'I know that as well as you, my lord, and you shall be paid—I will pay you—I will pay you, by G—! Do you make any doubt that I will pay you, my lord?'

'You look as if you thought of paying me in sharp coin,' said Lord Etherington; 'and I think that would scarce be consistent with the terms we stand upon towards each other.'

'By my soul,' said Mowbray, 'I cannot tell what these terms are; and to be at my wit's end at once, I should be glad to know. You set out upon paying addresses to my sister, and with your visits and opportunities at Shaws Castle, I cannot find the matter makes the least progress—it keeps moving without advancing, like a child's rocking-horse. Perhaps you think that you have curbed me up so tightly, that I dare not stir in the matter; but you will find it otherwise. Your lordship may keep a harem if you will, but my sister shall not enter it.'

'You are angry, and therefore you are unjust,' said Etherington; 'you know well enough it is your sister's fault that there is any delay. I am most willing—most desirous to call her Lady Etherington; nothing but her unlucky prejudices against me have retarded a union which I have so many reasons for desiring.'

'Well,' replied Mowbray, 'that shall be my business. I know no reason she can pretend to decline a marriage so honourable to her house, and which is approved of by me, that house's head. That matter shall be arranged in twenty-four hours.'

'It will do me the most sensible pleasure,' said Lord Etherington; 'you shall soon see how sincerely I desire your alliance; and as for the trifle you have lost'——

'It is no trifle to me, my lord—it is my ruin, but it shall be paid; and let me tell your lordship, you may thank your good luck for it more than your good play.'

'We will say no more of it at present, if you please,' said Lord Etherington, 'to-morrow is a new day; and if you will take my advice, you will not be too harsh with your sister. A little firmness is seldom amiss with young women, but severity'——

'I will pray your lordship to spare me your advice on this subject. However valuable it may be in other respects, I can, I take it, speak to my own sister in my own way.'

'Since you are so caustically disposed, Mowbray,' answered the earl, 'I presume you will not honour her ladyship's tea-table to-night, though I believe it will be the last of the season?'

'And why should you think so, my lord?' answered Mowbray, whose losses had rendered him testy and contradictory upon every subject that was started. 'Why should not I pay my respects to Lady Penelope, or any other tabby of quality? I have no title, indeed; but I suppose that my family'——

'Entitles you to become a canon of Strasburg, doubtless. But you do not seem in a very Christian mood for taking orders. All I meant to say was, that you and Lady Pen were not used to be on such a good footing.'

'Well, she sent me a card for her blow-out,' said Mowbray; 'and so I am resolved to go. When I have been there half an hour, I will ride up to Shaws Castle, and you shall hear of my speed in wooing for you to-morrow morning.'

CHAPTER XXXIV

A TEA-PARTY

Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round;
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
Thus let us welcome peaceful evening in.

COWPER'S *Task*.

THE approach of the cold and rainy season had now so far thinned the company at the Well, that, in order to secure the necessary degree of crowd upon her tea-nights,

Lady Penelope was obliged to employ some coaxing towards those whom she had considered as much under par in society. Even the doctor and Mrs. Blower were graciously smiled upon—for their marriage was now an arranged affair; and the event was of a nature likely to spread the reputation of the spa among wealthy widows, and medical gentlemen of more skill than practice. So in they came, the doctor smirking, gallanting, and performing all the bustling parade of settled and arranged courtship, with much of that grace wherewith a turkey-cock goes through the same ceremony. Old Touchwood had also attended her ladyship's summons, chiefly, it may be supposed, from his restless fidgety disposition, which seldom suffered him to remain absent even from those places of resort of which he usually professed his detestation. There was, besides, Mr. Winterblossom, who, in his usual spirit of quiet epicurism and quiet self-indulgence, was, under the fire of a volley of compliments to Lady Penelope, scheming to secure for himself an early cup of tea. There was Lady Binks also, with the wonted degree of sullenness in her beautiful face, angry at her husband as usual, and not disposed to be pleased with Lord Etherington for being absent, when she desired to excite Sir Bingo's jealousy. This she had discovered to be the most effectual way of tormenting the baronet, and she rejoiced in it with the savage glee of a hackney coachman, who has found a *rau*, where he can make his poor jade feel the whip. The rest of the company were also in attendance as usual. MacTurk himself was present, notwithstanding that he thought it an egregious waste of hot water, to bestow it upon compounding any mixture saving punch. He had of late associated himself a good deal with the traveller; not that they by any means resembled each other in temper or opinions, but rather because there was that degree of difference betwixt them which furnished perpetual subject for dispute and discussion. They were not long, on the present occasion, ere they lighted on a fertile source of controversy.

'Never tell me of your points of honour,' said Touchwood, raising his voice altogether above the general tone of polite conversation; 'all humbug, Captain MacTurk—mere

hair-traps to springe woodcocks: men of sense break through them.'

'Upon my word, sir,' said the captain, 'and myself is surprised to hear you—for, look you, sir, every man's honour is the breath of his nostrils. Cot tamn!'

'Then let men breathe through their mouths and be d—d,' returned the controversialist. 'I tell you, sir, that, besides its being forbidden, both by law and gospel, it 's an idiotical and totally absurd practice, that of duelling. An honest savage has more sense than to practise it; he takes his bow or his gun, as the thing may be, and shoots his enemy from behind a bush. And a very good way; for you see there can, in that case, be only one man's death between them.'

'Saul of my body, sir,' said the captain, 'gin ye promulgate sic doctrines among the good company, it 's my belief you will bring somebody to the gallows.'

'Thank ye, captain, with all my heart; but I stir up no quarrels—I leave war to them that live by it. I only say, that, except our old, stupid ancestors in the north-west here, I know no country so silly as to harbour this custom of duelling. It is unknown in Africa, among the negroes—in America.'

'Don't tell me that,' said the captain; 'a Yankee will fight with muskets and buck shot, rather than sit still with an affront. I should know Jonathan, I think.'

'Altogether unknown among the thousand tribes of India.'

'I'll be tamned, then!' said Captain MacTurk. 'Was I not in Tippoo's prison at Bangalore? and, when the joyful day of our liberation came, did we not solemnize it with fourteen little affairs, whereof we had been laying the foundation in our house of captivity, as Holy Writ has it, and never went farther to settle them than the glacis of the fort? By my soul, you would have thought there was a smart skirmish, the firing was so close; and did not I, Captain MacTurk, fight three of them myself, without moving my foot from the place I set it on?'

'And pray, sir, what might be the result of this Christian mode of giving thanks for your deliverance?' demanded Mr. Touchwood.

'A small list of casualties, after all,' said the captain; 'one killed on the spot, one died of his wounds, two wounded severely, three ditto slightly, and little Duncan Macphail reported missing. We were out of practice, after such long confinement. So you see how we manage matters in India, my dear friend.'

'You are to understand,' replied Touchwood, 'that I spoke only of the heathen natives, who, heathen as they are, live in the light of their own moral reason, and among whom ye shall therefore see better examples of practical morality than among such as yourselves; who, though calling yourselves Christians, have no more knowledge of the true acceptation and meaning of your religion than if you had left your Christianity at the Cape of Good Hope, as they say of you, and forgot to take it up when you came back again.'

'Py Cot! and I can tell you, sir,' said the captain, elevating at once his voice and his nostrils, and snuffing the air with a truculent and indignant visage, 'that I will not permit you or any man to throw any such scandal on my character. I thank Cot, I can bring good witness that I am as good a Christian as another, for a poor sinner, as the best of us are; and I am ready to justify my religion with my sword—Cot tamn! Compare my own self with a parcel of black heathen bodies and natives, that were never in the inner side of a kirk whilst they lived, but go about worshipping stocks and stones, and swinging themselves upon bamboos, like peasts, as they are!'

An indignant growling in his throat, which sounded like the acquiescence of his inward man in the indignant proposition which his external organs thus expressed, concluded this haughty speech, which, however, made not the least impression on Touchwood, who cared as little for angry tones and looks as he did for fine speeches. So that it is likely a quarrel between the Christian preceptor and the peacemaker might have occurred for the amusement of the company, had not the attention of both, but particularly that of Touchwood, been diverted from the topic of debate by the entrance of Lord Etherington and Mowbray.

The former was, as usual, all grace, smiles, and gentleness.

Yet, contrary to his wonted custom, which usually was, after a few general compliments, to attach himself particularly to Lady Binks, the earl, on the present occasion, avoided the side of the room on which that beautiful but sullen idol held her station, and attached himself exclusively to Lady Penelope Penfeather, enduring, without flinching, the strange variety of conceited *bavardage* which that lady's natural parts and acquired information enabled her to pour forth with unparalleled profusion.

An honest heathen, one of Plutarch's heroes, if I mistake not, dreamed once upon a night, that the figure of Proserpina, whom he had long worshipped, visited his slumbers with an angry and vindictive countenance, and menaced him with vengeance, in resentment of his having neglected her altars, with the usual fickleness of a polytheist, for those of some more fashionable divinity. Not that goddess of the infernal regions herself could assume a more haughty or more displeased countenance than that with which Lady Binks looked from time to time upon Lord Etherington, as if to warn him of the consequence of this departure from the allegiance which the young earl had hitherto manifested towards her, and which seemed now, she knew not why, unless it were for the purpose of public insult, to be transferred to her rival. Perilous as her eye-glances were, and much as they menaced, Lord Etherington felt at this moment the importance of soothing Lady Penelope to silence on the subject of the invalid's confession of that morning, to be more pressing than that of appeasing the indignation of Lady Binks. The former was a case of the most urgent necessity—the latter, if he was at all anxious on the subject, might, he perhaps thought, be trusted to time. Had the ladies continued on a tolerable footing together, he might have endeavoured to conciliate both. But the bitterness of their long-suppressed feud had greatly increased, now that it was probable the end of the season was to separate them, in all likelihood for ever; so that Lady Penelope had no longer any motive for countenancing Lady Binks, or the lady of Sir Bingo for desiring Lady Penelope's countenance. The wealth and lavish expense of the one was no longer to render more illustrious the suit of her right honourable friend, nor was the society of

Lady Penelope likely to be soon again useful or necessary to Lady Binks. So that neither were any longer desirous to suppress symptoms of the mutual contempt and dislike which they had long nourished for each other; and whoever should, in this decisive hour, take part with one, had little henceforward to expect from her rival. What further and more private reasons Lady Binks might have to resent the defection of Lord Etherington, have never come with certainty to our knowledge; but it was said there had been high words between them on the floating report that his lordship's visits to Shaws Castle were dictated by the wish to find a bride there.

Women's wits are said to be quick in spying the surest means of avenging a real or supposed slight. After biting her pretty lips, and revolving in her mind the readiest means of vengeance, fate threw in her way young Mowbray of Saint Ronan's. She looked at him, and endeavoured to fix his attention with a nod and gracious smile, such as in an ordinary mood would have instantly drawn him to her side. On receiving in answer only a vacant glance and a bow, she was led to observe him more attentively, and was induced to believe, from his wavering look, varying complexion, and unsteady step, that he had been drinking unusually deep. Still his eye was less that of an intoxicated than of a disturbed and desperate man, one whose faculties were engrossed by deep and turbid reflection, which withdrew him from the passing scene.

'Do you observe how ill Mr. Mowbray looks?' said she, in a loud whisper; 'I hope he has not heard what Lady Penelope was just now saying of his family?'

'Unless he hears it from you, my lady,' answered Mr. Touchwood, who, upon Mowbray's entrance, had broken off his discourse with MacTurk, 'I think there is little chance of his learning it from any other person.'

'What is the matter?' said Mowbray, sharply, addressing Chatterly and Winterblossom; but the one shrank nervously from the question, protesting, he indeed had not been precisely attending to what had been passing among the ladies, and Winterblossom bowed out of the scrape with quiet and cautious politeness—'He really had not given particular attention to what was passing—I was negotiating

with Mrs. Jones for an additional lump of sugar to my coffee. Egad, it was so difficult a piece of diplomacy,' he added, sinking his voice, 'that I have an idea her ladyship calculates the West India produce by grains and pennyweights.'

The innuendo, if designed to make Mowbray smile, was far from succeeding. He stepped forward, with more than usual stiffness in his air, which was never entirely free from self-consequence, and said to Lady Binks, 'May I request to know of your ladyship what particular respecting my family had the honour to engage the attention of the company?'

'I was only a listener, Mr. Mowbray,' returned Lady Binks, with evident enjoyment of the rising indignation which she read in his countenance; 'not being queen of the night, I am not at all disposed to be answerable for the turn of the conversation.'

Mowbray, in no humour to bear jesting, yet afraid to expose himself by further inquiry in a company so public, darted a fierce look at Lady Penelope, then in close conversation with Lord Etherington—advanced a step or two towards them—then, as if checking himself, turned on his heel and left the room. A few minutes afterwards, and when certain satirical nods and winks were circulating among the assembly, a waiter slid a piece of paper into Mrs. Jones's hand, who, on looking at the contents, seemed about to leave the room.

'Jones—Jones!' exclaimed Lady Penelope, in surprise and displeasure.

'Only the key of the tea-caddie, your ladyship,' answered Jones; 'I will be back in an instant.'

'Jones—Jones!' again exclaimed her mistress, 'here is enough—' of tea, she would have said; but Lord Etherington was so near her, that she was ashamed to complete the sentence, and had only hope in Jones's quickness of apprehension, and the prospect that she would be unable to find the key which she went in search of.

Jones, meanwhile, tripped off to a sort of housekeeper's apartment, of which she was *locum tenens* for the evening, for the more ready supply of whatever might be wanted on Lady Penelope's night, as it was called. Here she found Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's, whom she instantly began

to assail with, 'La! now, Mr. Mowbray, you are such another gentleman! I am sure you will make me lose my place—I'll swear you will—what can you have to say, that you could not as well put off for an hour?'

'I want to know, Jones,' answered Mowbray, in a different tone, perhaps, from what the damsel expected, 'what your lady was just now saying about my family.'

'Pshaw!—was that all?' answered Mrs. Jones. 'What should she be saying?—nonsense—Who minds what she says? I am sure I never do, for one.'

'Nay, but, my dear Jones,' said Mowbray, 'I insist upon knowing—I must know, and I *will* know.'

'La! Mr. Mowbray, why should I make mischief? As I live, I hear some one coming! and if you were found speaking with me here—indeed, indeed, some one is coming!'

'The devil may come, if he will!' said Mowbray, 'but we do not part, pretty mistress, till you tell me what I wish to know.'

'Lord, sir, you frighten me!' answered Jones; 'but all the room heard it as well as I—it was about Miss Mowbray—and that my lady would be shy of her company hereafter—for that she was—she was'——

'For that my sister was *what*?' said Mowbray fiercely, seizing her arm.

'Lord, sir, you terrify me,' said Jones, beginning to cry; 'at any rate, it was not I that said it—it was Lady Penelope.'

'And what was it the old, adder-tongued madwoman dared to say of Clara Mowbray—Speak out plainly, and directly, or, by Heaven, I'll make you!'

'Hold, sir—hold, for God's sake!—you will break my arm,' answered the terrified handmaiden. 'I am sure I know no harm of Miss Mowbray; only, my lady spoke as if she was no better than she ought to be. Lord, sir, there is some one listening at the door!'—and making a spring out of his grasp, she hastened back to the room in which the company were assembled.

Mowbray stood petrified at the news he had heard, ignorant alike what could be the motive for a calumny so atrocious, and uncertain what he were best do to put a stop

to the scandal. To his further confusion, he was presently convinced of the truth of Mrs. Jones's belief that they had been watched, for, as he went to the door of the apartment, he was met by Mr. Touchwood.

'What has brought you here, sir?' said Mowbray sternly.

'Hoity toity,' answered the traveller, 'why, how come *you* here, if you go to that, squire? Egad, Lady Penelope is trembling for her souchong, so I just took a step here to save her ladyship the trouble of looking after Mrs. Jones in person, which, I think, might have been a worse interruption than mine, Mr. Mowbray.'

'Pshaw, sir, you talk nonsense,' said Mowbray; 'the tea-room is so infernally hot, that I had sat down here a moment to draw breath, when the young woman came in.'

'And you are going to run away, now the old gentleman is come in,' said Touchwood. 'Come, sir, I am more your friend than you may think.'

'Sir, you are intrusive—I want nothing that you can give me,' said Mowbray.

'That is a mistake,' answered the senior; 'for I can supply you with what most young men want—money and wisdom.'

'You will do well to keep both till they are wanted,' said Mowbray.

'Why, so I would, squire, only that I have taken something of a fancy for your family; and they are supposed to have wanted cash and good counsel for two generations, if not for three.'

'Sir,' said Mowbray angrily, 'you are too old either to play the buffoon or to get buffoon's payment.'

'Which is like monkey's allowance, I suppose,' said the traveller, 'more kicks than halfpence. Well—at least I am not young enough to quarrel with boys for bullying. I'll convince you, however, Mr. Mowbray, that I know some more of your affairs than what you give me credit for.'

'It may be,' answered Mowbray; 'but you will oblige me more by minding your own.'

'Very like; meantime, your losses to-night to my Lord Etherington are no trifle, and no secret neither.'

'Mr. Touchwood, I desire to know where you had your information?' said Mowbray.

'A matter of very little consequence compared to its truth or falsehood, Mr. Mowbray,' answered the old gentleman.

'But of the last importance to me, sir,' said Mowbray. 'In a word, had you such information by or through means of Lord Etherington? Answer me this single question, and then I shall know better what to think on the subject.'

'Upon my honour,' said Touchwood, 'I neither had my information from Lord Etherington directly nor indirectly. I say thus much to give you satisfaction, and I now expect you will hear me with patience.'

'Forgive me, sir,' interrupted Mowbray, 'one further question. I understand something was said in disparagement of my sister just as I entered the tea-room?'

'Hem—hem—hem,' said Touchwood, hesitating. 'I am sorry your ears have served you so well—something there *was* said lightly, something that can be easily explained, I dare say;—And now, Mr. Mowbray, let me speak a few serious words with you.'

'And now, Mr. Touchwood, we have no more to say to each other—good evening to you.'

He brushed past the old man, who in vain endeavoured to stop him, and, hurrying to the stable, demanded his horse. It was ready saddled, and waited his orders; but even the short time that was necessary to bring it to the door of the stable was exasperating to Mowbray's impatience. Not less exasperating was the constant interceding voice of Touchwood, who, in tones alternately plaintive and snappish, kept on a string of expostulations.

'Mr. Mowbray, only five words with you—Mr. Mowbray, you will repent this—Is this a night to ride in, Mr. Mowbray? My stars, sir, if you would but have five minutes' patience!'

Curses, not loud but deep, muttered in the throat of the impatient laird, were the only reply, until his horse was brought out, when, staying no further question, he sprang into the saddle. The poor horse paid for the delay, which could not be laid to his charge. Mowbray struck him hard with his spurs as soon as he was in his seat—the noble animal reared, bolted, and sprang forward like a deer, over stock and stone, the nearest road—and we are aware it was a rough one—to Shaws Castle. There is a sort of instinct

by which horses perceive the humour of their riders, and are furious and impetuous, or dull and sluggish, as if to correspond with it; and Mowbray's gallant steed seemed on this occasion to feel all the stings of his master's internal ferment, although not again urged with the spur. The ostler stood listening to the clash of the hoofs, succeeding each other in thick and close gallop, until they died away in the distant woodland.

'If St. Ronan's reach home this night, with his neck unbroken,' muttered the fellow, 'the devil must have it in keeping.'

'Mercy on us!' said the traveller, 'he rides like a Bedouin Arab! but in the desert there are neither trees to cross the road, nor cleuchs, nor linns, nor floods, nor fords. Well, I must set to work myself, or this gear will get worse than even I can mend. Here you, ostler, let me have your best pair of horses instantly to Shaws Castle.'

'To Shaws Castle, sir?' said the man, with some surprise.

'Yes—do you not know such a place?'

'In troth, sir, sae few company go there, except on the great ball-day, that we have had time to forget the road to it—but St. Ronan's was here even now, sir.'

'Aye, what of that?—he has ridden on to get supper ready—so, turn out, without loss of time.'

'At your pleasure, sir,' said the fellow, and called to the postilion accordingly.

CHAPTER XXXV

DEBATE

Sedet post equitem atra cura—

Still though the headlong cavalier,
O'er rough and smooth, in wild career,
Seems racing with the wind;
His sad companion,—ghastly pale,
And darksome as a widow's veil,
Care—keeps her seat behind.

HORACE.

WELL was it that night for Mowbray that he had always piqued himself on his horses, and that the animal on which he was then mounted was as surefooted and sagacious as

he was mettled and fiery. For those who observed next day the print of the hoofs on the broken and rugged track through which the creature had been driven at full speed by his furious master, might easily see that in more than a dozen of places the horse and rider had been within a few inches of destruction. One bough of a gnarled and stunted oak-tree, which stretched across the road, seemed in particular to have opposed an almost fatal barrier to the horseman's career. In striking his head against this impediment, the force of the blow had been broken in some measure by a high-crowned hat, yet the violence of the shock was sufficient to shiver the branch to pieces. Fortunately, it was already decayed; but, even in that state, it was subject of astonishment to every one that no fatal damage had been sustained in so formidable an encounter. Mowbray himself was unconscious of the accident.

Scarcely aware that he had been riding at an unusual rate, scarce sensible that he had ridden faster perhaps than ever he followed the hounds, Mowbray alighted at his stable door, and flung the bridle to his groom, who held up his hands in astonishment when he beheld the condition of the favourite horse; but, concluding that his master must be intoxicated, he prudently forbore to make any observations.

No sooner did the unfortunate traveller suspend that rapid motion, by which he seemed to wish to annihilate, as far as possible, time and space, in order to reach the place he had now attained, than it seemed to him as if he would have given the world that seas and deserts had lain between him and the house of his fathers, as well as that only sister with whom he was now about to have a decisive interview.

'But the place and the hour are arrived,' he said, biting his lip with anguish; 'this explanation must be decisive; and whatever evils may attend it, suspense must be ended now, at once and for ever.'

He entered the castle, and took the light from the old domestic, who, hearing the clatter of his horse's feet, had opened the door to receive him.

'Is my sister in her parlour?' he asked, but in so hollow a voice, that the old man only answered his question by another, 'Was his honour well?'

'Quite well, Patrick—never better in my life,' said

Mowbray; and turning his back on the old man, as if to prevent his observing whether his countenance and his words corresponded, he pursued his way to his sister's apartment. The sound of his step upon the passage roused Clara from a reverie, perhaps a sad one; and she had trimmed her lamp, and stirred her fire, so slow did he walk, before he at length entered her apartment.

'You are a good boy, brother,' she said, 'to come thus early home; and I have some good news for your reward. The groom has fetched back Trimmer—He was lying by the dead hare, and he had chased him as far as Drumlyford—the shepherd had carried him to the shieling, till some one should claim him.'

'I would he had hanged him, with all my heart!' said Mowbray.

'How?—hang Trimmer?—your favourite Trimmer, that has beat the whole country?—and it was only this morning you were half-crying because he was amissing, and like to murder man and mother's son?'

'The better I like any living thing,' answered Mowbray, 'the more reason I have for wishing it dead and at rest; for neither I, nor anything that I love, will ever be happy more.'

'You cannot frighten me, John, with these flights,' answered Clara, trembling, although she endeavoured to look unconcerned—'You have used me to them too often.'

'It is well for you, then; you will be ruined without the shock of surprise.'

'So much the better—We have been,' said Clara,

> 'So constantly in poortith's sight,
> The thoughts on't gie us little fright.

So say I with honest Robert Burns.

'D—n Burns and his trash!' said Mowbray, with the impatience of a man determined to be angry with everything but himself, who was the real source of the evil.

'And why damn poor Burns?' said Clara composedly, 'it is not his fault if you have not risen a winner, for that, I suppose, is the cause of all this uproar.'

'Would it not make any one lose patience,' said Mowbray, 'to hear her quoting the rhapsodies of a hobnailed peasant, when a man is speaking of the downfall of an ancient house!

Your ploughman, I suppose, becoming one degree poorer than he was born to be, would only go without his dinner, or without his usual potation of ale. His comrades would cry "poor fellow!" and let him eat out of their kit, and drink out of their bicker without scruple, till his own was full again. But the poor gentleman—the downfallen man of rank—the degraded man of birth—the disabled and disarmed man of power!—it is he that is to be pitied, who loses not merely drink and dinner, but honour, situation, credit, character, and name itself!'

'You are declaiming in this manner in order to terrify me,' said Clara; 'but, friend John, I know you and your ways, and I have made up my mind upon all contingencies that can take place. I will tell you more—I have stood on this tottering pinnacle of rank and fashion, if our situation can be termed such, till my head is dizzy with the instability of my eminence; and I feel the strange desire of tossing myself down, which the devil is said to put into folk's heads when they stand on the top of steeples—at least, I had rather the plunge were over.'

'Be satisfied, then; if that will satisfy you—the plunge *is* over, and we are—what they used to call it in Scotland—gentle beggars, creatures to whom our second, and third, and fourth, and fifth cousins may, if they please, give a place at the side-table, and a seat in the carriage with the lady's maid, if driving backwards will not make us sick.'

'They may give it to those who will take it,' said Clara; 'but I am determined to eat bread of my own buying—I can do twenty things, and I am sure some one or other of them will bring me all the little money I will need. I have been trying, John, for several months, how little I can live upon, and you would laugh if you heard how low I have brought the account.'

'There is a difference, Clara, between fanciful experiments and real poverty—the one is a masquerade, which we can end when we please, the other is wretchedness for life.'

'Methinks, brother,' replied Miss Mowbray, 'it would be better for you to set me an example how to carry my good resolutions into effect, than to ridicule them.'

'Why, what would you have me do?' said he, fiercely—'turn postilion, or rough-rider, or whipper-in? I don't

know anything else that my education, as I have used it, has fitted me for—and then some of my old acquaintance would, I dare say, give me a crown to drink now and then for old acquaintance' sake.'

'This is not the way, John, that men of sense think or speak of serious misfortunes,' answered his sister; 'and I do not believe that this is so serious as it is your pleasure to make it.'

'Believe the very worst you can think,' replied he, 'and you will not believe bad enough! You have neither a guinea, nor a house, nor a friend; pass but a day, and it is a chance that you will not have a brother.'

'My dear John, you have drunk hard—rode hard.'

'Yes—such tidings deserved to be carried express, especially to a young lady who receives them so well,' answered Mowbray bitterly. 'I suppose, now, it will make no impression, if I were to tell you that you have it in your power to stop all this ruin?'

'By consummating my own, I suppose—Brother, I said you could not make me tremble, but you have found a way to do it.'

'What, you expect I am again to urge you with Lord Etherington's courtship?—That *might* have saved all, indeed—But that day of grace is over.'

'I am glad of it, with all my spirit,' said Clara; 'may it take with it all that we can quarrel about! But till this instant, I thought it was for this very point that this long voyage was bound, and that you were endeavouring to persuade me of the reality of the danger of the storm, in order to reconcile me to the harbour.'

'You are mad, I think, in earnest,' said Mowbray; 'can you really be so absurd as to rejoice that you have no way left to relieve yourself and me from ruin, want, and shame?'

'From shame, brother?' said Clara. 'No shame in honest poverty, I hope.'

'That is according as folks have used their prosperity, Clara. I must speak to the point. There are strange reports going below—By Heaven! they are enough to disturb the ashes of the dead! Were I to mention them, I should expect our poor mother to enter the room—Clara Mowbray, can you guess what I mean?'

It was with the utmost exertion, yet in a faltering voice, that she was able, after an ineffectual effort, to utter the monosyllable, '*No*!'

'By Heaven! I am ashamed—I am even *afraid* to express my own meaning! Clara, what is there which makes you so obstinately reject every proposal of marriage? Is it that you feel yourself unworthy to be the wife of an honest man? Speak out! Evil Fame has been busy with your reputation—speak out! Give me the right to cram their lies down the throats of the inventors, and when I go among them to-morrow, I shall know how to treat those who cast reflections on you! The fortunes of our house are ruined, but no tongue shall slander its honour. Speak—speak, wretched girl! why are you silent?'

'Stay at home, brother,' said Clara; 'stay at home, if you regard our house's honour—murder cannot mend misery—Stay at home, and let them talk of me as they will—they can scarcely say worse of me than I deserve!'

The passions of Mowbray, at all times ungovernably strong, were at present inflamed by wine, by his rapid journey, and the previously disturbed state of his mind. He set his teeth, clenched his hands, looked on the ground, as one that forms some horrid resolution, and muttered almost unintelligibly, 'It were charity to kill her!'

'Oh! no—no—no!' exclaimed the terrified girl, throwing herself at his feet; 'Do not kill me, brother! I have wished for death—thought of death—prayed for death—but, oh! it is frightful to think that he is near—Oh! not a bloody death, brother, nor by your hand!'

She held him close by the knees as she spoke, and expressed, in her looks and accents, the utmost terror. It was not, indeed, without reason; for the extreme solitude of the place, the violent and inflamed passions of her brother, and the desperate circumstances to which he had reduced himself, seemed all to concur to render some horrid act of violence not an improbable termination of this strange interview.

Mowbray folded his arms, without unclenching his hands, or raising his head, while his sister continued on the floor, clasping him round the knees with all her strength, and begging piteously for her life and for mercy.

'Fool!' he said, at last, 'let me go! Who cares for thy worthless life?—who cares if thou live or die? Live, if thou canst—and be the hate and scorn of every one else, as much as thou art mine!'

He grasped her by the shoulder, with one hand pushed her from him, and, as she arose from the floor, and again pressed to throw her arms around his neck, he repulsed her with his arm and hand, with a push—or blow—it might be termed either one or the other—violent enough, in her weak state, to have again extended her on the ground, had not a chair received her as she fell. He looked at her with ferocity, grappled a moment in his pocket; then ran to the window, and throwing the sash violently up, thrust himself as far as he could without falling, into the open air. Terrified, and yet her feelings of his unkindness predominating even above her fears, Clara continued to exclaim,

'Oh, brother, say you did not mean this! Oh, say you did not mean to strike me! Oh, whatever I have deserved, be not you the executioner! It is not manly—it is not natural—there are but two of us in the world!'

He returned no answer; and, observing that he continued to stretch himself from the window, which was in the second story of the building, and overlooked the court, a new cause of apprehension mingled, in some measure, with her personal fears. Timidly, and with streaming eyes and uplifted hands, she approached her angry brother, and fearfully, yet firmly, seized the skirt of his coat, as if anxious to preserve him from the effects of that despair which so lately seemed turned against her, and now against himself.

He felt the pressure of her hold, and drawing himself angrily back, asked her sternly what she wanted.

'Nothing,' she said, quitting her hold of his coat; 'but what—what did he look after so anxiously?'

'After the devil!' he answered fiercely; then drawing in his head, and taking her hand, 'By my soul, Clara—it is true, if ever there was truth in such a tale! He stood by me just now, and urged me to murder thee! What else could have put my hunting-knife into my thought? Aye, by God, and into my very hand—at such a moment? Yonder I could almost fancy I see him fly, the wood, and the rock, and the water, gleaming back the dark-red furnace-light

that is shed on them by his dragon wings! By my soul, I can hardly suppose it fancy! I can hardly think but that I was under the influence of an evil spirit—under an act of fiendish possession! But gone as he is, gone let him be—and thou, too ready implement of evil, be thou gone after him!' He drew from his pocket his right hand, which had all this time held his hunting-knife, and threw the implement into the courtyard as he spoke; then, with a mournful quietness and solemnity of manner, shut the window, and led his sister by the hand to her usual seat, which her tottering steps scarce enabled her to reach. 'Clara,' he said, after a pause of mournful silence, 'we must think what is to be done, without passion or violence—there may be something for us in the dice yet, if we do not throw away our game. A blot is never a blot till it is hit—dishonour concealed is not dishonour in some respects. Dost thou attend to me, wretched girl?' he said, suddenly and sternly raising his voice.

'Yes, brother—yes indeed, brother,' she hastily replied, terrified even by delay again to awaken his ferocious and ungovernable temper.

'Thus it must be, then,' he said. 'You must marry this Etherington—there is no help for it, Clara—You cannot complain of what your own vice and folly have rendered inevitable.'

'But, brother'—said the trembling girl.

'Be silent. I know all that you would say. You love him not, you would say. I love him not, no more than you. Nay, what is more, he loves you not—if he did, I might scruple to give you to him, you being such as you have owned yourself. But you shall wed him out of hate, Clara—or for the interest of your family—or for what reason you will—But wed him you shall and must.'

'Brother—dearest brother—one single word!'

'Not of refusal or expostulation—that time is gone by,' said her brother. 'When I believed thee what I thought thee this morning, I might advise you, but I could not compel. But, since the honour of our family has been disgraced by your means, it is but just, that, if possible, its disgrace should be hidden; and it shall—aye, if selling you for a slave would tend to conceal it!'

'You do worse—you do worse by me! A slave in an open market may be bought by a kind master—you do not give me that chance—you wed me to one who '——

'Fear him not, nor the worst that he can do, Clara,' said her brother. 'I know on what terms he marries; and, being once more your brother, as your obedience in this matter will make me, he had better tear his flesh from his bones with his own teeth, than do thee any displeasure! By Heaven, I hate him so much—for he has outreached me every way—that methinks it is some consolation that he will not receive in thee the excellent creature I thought thee! Fallen as thou art, thou art still too good for him.'

Encouraged by the more gentle and almost affectionate tone in which her brother spoke, Clara could not help saying, although almost in a whisper, 'I trust it will not be so—I trust he will consider his own condition, honour, and happiness, better than to share it with me.'

'Let him utter such a scruple if he dares,' said Mowbray —'But he dares not hesitate—he knows that the instant he recedes from addressing you, he signs his own death-warrant or mine, or perhaps that of both; and his views, too, are of a kind that will not be relinquished on a point of scrupulous delicacy merely. Therefore, Clara, nourish no such thought in your heart as that there is the least possibility of your escaping such a marriage! The match is booked—Swear you will not hesitate.'

'I will not,' she said, almost breathlessly, terrified lest he was about to start once more into the fit of unbridled fury which had before seized on him.

'Do not even whisper or hint an objection, but submit to your fate, for it is inevitable.'

'I will—submit '—answered Clara, in the same trembling accent.

'And I,' he said, 'will spare you—at least at present—and it may be for ever—all inquiry into the guilt which you have confessed. Rumours there were of misconduct, which reached my ears even in England; but who could have believed them that looked on you daily, and witnessed your late course of life? On this subject I will be at present silent—perhaps may not again touch on it—that is, if you do nothing to thwart my pleasure, or to avoid

the fate which circumstances render unavoidable. And now it is late—retire, Clara, to your bed—think on what I have said as what necessity has determined, and not my selfish pleasure.'

He held out his hand, and she placed, but not without reluctant terror, her trembling palm in his. In this manner, and with a sort of mournful solemnity, as if they had been in attendance upon a funeral, he handed his sister through a gallery hung with old family pictures, at the end of which was Clara's bedchamber. The moon, which at this moment looked out through a huge volume of mustering clouds that had long been boding storm, fell on the two last descendants of that ancient family, as they glided hand in hand, more like the ghosts of the deceased than like living persons, through the hall and amongst the portraits of their forefathers. The same thoughts were in the breasts of both, but neither attempted to say, while they cast a flitting glance on the pallid and decayed representations, 'How little did these anticipate this catastrophe of their house!' At the door of the bedroom Mowbray quitted his sister's hand, and said, 'Clara, you should to-night thank God that saved you from a great danger, and me from a deadly sin.'

'I will,' she answered—'I will.' And, as if her terror had been anew excited by this allusion to what had passed, she bid her brother hastily good night, and was no sooner within her apartment, than he heard her turn the key in the lock, and draw two bolts besides.

'I understand you, Clara,' muttered Mowbray between his teeth, as he heard one bar drawn after another. 'But if you could earth yourself under Ben Nevis, you could not escape what fate has destined for you. Yes!' he said to himself, as he walked with slow and moody pace through the moonlit gallery, uncertain whether to return to the parlour, or to retire to his solitary chamber, when his attention was roused by a noise in the courtyard.

The night was not indeed far advanced, but it had been so long since Shaws Castle received a guest, that, had Mowbray not heard the rolling of wheels in the courtyard, he might have thought rather of housebreakers than of visitors. But, as the sound of a carriage and horses was

distinctly heard, it instantly occurred to him that the guest must be Lord Etherington, come, even at this late hour, to speak with him on the reports which were current to his sister's prejudice, and perhaps to declare his addresses to her were at an end. Eager to know the worst, and to bring matters to a decision, he re-entered the apartment he had just left, where the lights were still burning, and, calling loudly to Patrick, whom he heard in communing with the postilion, commanded him to show the visitor to Miss Mowbray's parlour. It was not the light step of the young nobleman which came tramping, or rather stamping, through the long passage, and up the two or three steps at the end of it. Neither was it Lord Etherington's graceful figure which was seen when the door opened, but the stout square substance of Mr. Peregrine Touchwood.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A RELATIVE

Claim'd kindred there, and had his claim allow'd.
The Deserted Village.

STARTING at the unexpected and undesired apparition which presented itself, in the manner described at the end of the last chapter, Mowbray yet felt, at the same time, a kind of relief, that his meeting with Lord Etherington, painfully decisive as that meeting must be, was for a time suspended. So it was with a mixture of peevishness and internal satisfaction, that he demanded what had procured him the honour of a visit from Mr. Touchwood at this late hour.

'Necessity, that makes the old wife trot,' replied Touchwood; 'no choice of mine, I assure you—Gad, Mr. Mowbray, I would rather have crossed Saint Gothard, than run the risk I have done to-night, rumbling through your breakneck roads in that d——d old wheelbarrow. On my word, I believe I must be troublesome to your butler for a draught of something—I am as thirsty as a coal-heaver that is

working by the piece. You have porter, I suppose, or good old Scotch twopenny ?'

With a secret execration on his visitor's effrontery, Mr. Mowbray ordered the servant to put down wine and water, of which Touchwood mixed a gobletful, and drank it off.

'We are a small family,' said his entertainer; 'and I am seldom at home—still more seldom receive guests when I chance to be here—I am sorry I have no malt liquor, if you prefer it.'

'Prefer it ?' said Touchwood, compounding, however, another glass of sherry and water, and adding a large piece of sugar, to correct the hoarseness which, he observed, his night-journey might bring on—'to be sure I prefer it, and so does everybody, except Frenchmen and dandies. No offence, Mr. Mowbray, but you should order a hogshead from Meux—the brown-stout, wired down for exportation to the colonies, keeps for any length of time, and in every climate—I have drunk it where it must have cost a guinea a quart, if interest had been counted.'

'When I *expect* the honour of a visit from you, Mr. Touchwood, I will endeavour to be better provided,' answered Mowbray; 'at present your arrival has been without notice, and I would be glad to know if it has any particular object.'

'This is what I call coming to the point,' said Mr. Touchwood, thrusting out his stout legs, accoutred as they were with the ancient defences called boot-hose, so as to rest his heels upon the fender. 'Upon my life, the fire turns the best flower in the garden at this season of the year—I'll take the freedom to throw on a log. Is it not a strange thing, by the by, that one never sees a faggot in Scotland ? You have much small wood, Mr. Mowbray, I wonder you do not get some fellow from the midland counties to teach your people how to make a faggot.'

'Did you come all the way to Shaws Castle,' asked Mowbray rather testily, 'to instruct me in the mystery of faggot-making ?'

'Not exactly—not exactly,' answered the undaunted Touchwood; 'but there is a right and a wrong way in everything—a word by the way, on any useful subject, can never fall amiss. As for my immediate and more pressing

business, I can assure you that it is of a nature sufficiently urgent, since it brings me to a house in which I am much surprised to find myself.'

'The surprise is mutual, sir,' said Mowbray, gravely observing that his guest made a pause; 'it is full time you should explain it.'

'Well, then,' replied Touchwood; 'I must first ask you whether you have never heard of a certain old gentleman, called Scrogie, who took it into what he called his head, poor man, to be ashamed of the name he bore, though owned by many honest and respectable men, and chose to join it to your surname of Mowbray, as having a more chivalrous Norman sounding, and, in a word, a gentleman-like twang with it?'

'I have heard of such a person, though only lately,' said Mowbray. 'Reginald Scrogie Mowbray was his name. I have reason to consider his alliance with my family as undoubted, though you seem to mention it with a sneer, sir. I believe Mr. S. Mowbray regulated his family settlements very much upon the idea that his heir was to intermarry with our house.'

'True, true, Mr. Mowbray,' answered Touchwood; 'and certainly it is not your business to lay the axe to the root of the genealogical tree, that is like to bear golden apples for you—Ha!'

'Well, well, sir—proceed—proceed,' answered Mowbray.

'You may also have heard that this old gentleman had a son, who would willingly have cut up the said family-tree into faggots; who thought Scrogie sounded as well as Mowbray, and had no fancy for an imaginary gentility which was to be attained by the change of one's natural name, and the disowning, as it were, of one's actual relations?'

'I think I have heard from Lord Etherington,' answered Mowbray, 'to whose communications I owe most of my knowledge about these Scrogie people, that old Mr. Scrogie Mowbray was unfortunate in a son who thwarted his father on every occasion—would embrace no opportunity which fortunate chances held out of raising and distinguishing the family—had imbibed low tastes, wandering habits, and singular objects of pursuit—on account of which his father disinherited him.'

'It is very true, Mr. Mowbray,' proceeded Touchwood, 'that this person did happen to fall under his father's displeasure, because he scorned forms and flummery—loved better to make money as an honest merchant, than to throw it away as an idle gentleman—never called a coach when walking on foot would serve the turn—and liked the Royal Exchange better than St. James's Park. In short, his father disinherited him, because he had the qualities for doubling the estate, rather than those for squandering it.'

'All this may be quite correct, Mr. Touchwood,' replied Mowbray; 'but pray, what has this Mr. Scrogie, Junior, to do with you or me?'

'Do with you or me!' said Touchwood, as if surprised at the question; 'he has a great deal to do with me at least, since I am the very man myself.'

'The devil you are!' said Mowbray, opening wide his eyes in turn; 'Mr. A—a—your name is Touchwood—P. Touchwood—Paul, I suppose, or Peter—I read it so in the subscription book at the Well.'

'Peregrine, sir, Peregrine—my mother would have me so christened, because Peregrine Pickle came out during her confinement; and my poor foolish father acquiesced, because he thought it genteel, and derived from the Willoughbies. I don't like it, and I always write P. short, and you might have remarked an S. also before the surname—I use at present P. S. Touchwood. I had an old acquaintance in the city, who loved his jest—He always called me Postscript Touchwood.'

'Then, sir,' said Mowbray, 'if you are really Mr. Scrogie, *tout court*, I must suppose the name of Touchwood is assumed?'

'What the devil!' replied Mr. P. S. Touchwood, 'do you suppose there is no name in the English nation will couple up legitimately with my paternal name of Scrogie, except your own, Mr. Mowbray? I assure you I got the name of Touchwood, and a pretty spell of money along with it, from an old godfather, who admired my spirit in sticking by commerce.'

'Well, sir, every one has his taste—many would have thought it better to enjoy a hereditary estate, by keeping

your father's name of Mowbray, than to have gained another by assuming a stranger's name of Touchwood.'

'Who told you Mr. Touchwood was a stranger to me?' said the traveller; 'for aught I know, he had a better title to the duties of a son from me, than the poor old man who made such a fool of himself by trying to turn gentleman in his old age. He was my grandfather's partner in the great firm of Touchwood, Scrogie, and Co. Let me tell you, there is as good inheritance in house as in field—a man's partners are his fathers and brothers, and a head clerk may be likened to a kind of first cousin.'

'I meant no offence whatever, Mr. Touchwood Scrogie.'

'Scrogie Touchwood, if you please,' said the senior; 'the scrog branch first, for it must become rotten ere it become touchwood—ha, ha, ha!—you take me.'

'A singular old fellow this,' said Mowbray to himself, 'and speaks in all the dignity of dollars; but I will be civil to him, till I can see what he is driving at. You are facetious, Mr. Touchwood,' he proceeded aloud. 'I was only going to say that, although you set no value upon your connexion with my family, yet I cannot forget that such a circumstance exists; and therefore I bid you heartily welcome to Shaws Castle.'

'Thank ye, thank ye, Mr. Mowbray—I knew you would see the thing right. To tell you the truth, I should not have cared much to come a-begging for your acquaintance and cousinship, and so forth; but that I thought you would be more tractable in your adversity, than was your father in his prosperity.'

'Did you know my father, sir?' said Mowbray.

'Aye, aye—I came once down here, and was introduced to him—saw your sister and you when you were children—had thoughts of making my will then, and should have clapped you both in before I set out to double Cape Horn. But, gad, I wish my poor father had seen the reception I got! I did not let the old gentleman, Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's that was then, smoke my money-bags—that might have made him more tractable—not but that we went on indifferent well for a day or two, till I got a hint that my room was wanted, for that the Duke of Devil-knows-what was expected, and my bed was to serve

his valet de chambre. "Oh, damn all gentle cousins!" said I, and off I set on the pad round the world again, and thought no more of the Mowbrays till a year or so ago.'

'And, pray, what recalled us to your recollection?'

'Why,' said Touchwood, 'I was settled for some time at Smyrna (for I turn the penny go where I will—I have done a little business even since I came here);—but being at Smyrna, as I said, I became acquainted with Francis Tyrrel.'

'The natural brother of Lord Etherington,' said Mowbray.

'Aye, so called,' answered Touchwood; 'but by and by he is more likely to prove the Earl of Etherington himself, and t'other fine fellow the bastard.'

'The devil he is! You surprise me, Mr. Touchwood.'

'I thought I should—I thought I should—Faith, I am sometimes surprised myself at the turn things take in this world. But the thing is not the less certain—the proofs are lying in the strong chest of our house at London, deposited there by the old earl, who repented of his roguery to Miss Martigny long before he died, but had not courage enough to do his legitimate son justice till the sexton had housed him.'

'Good Heaven, sir!' said Mowbray; 'and did you know all this while that I was about to bestow the only sister of my house upon an impostor?'

'What was my business with that, Mr. Mowbray?' replied Touchwood; 'you would have been very angry had any one suspected you of not being sharp enough to look out for yourself and your sister both. Besides, Lord Etherington, bad enough as he may be in other respects, was, till very lately, no impostor, or an innocent one, for he only occupied the situation in which his father had placed him. And, indeed, when I understood, upon coming to England, that he was gone down here, and, as I conjectured, to pay his addresses to your sister, to say truth, I did not see he could do better. Here was a poor fellow that was about to cease to be a lord and a wealthy man; was it not very reasonable that he should make the most of dignity while he had it? and if, by marrying a pretty

girl while in possession of his title, he could get possession of the good estate of Nettlewood, why, I could see nothing in it but a very pretty way of breaking his fall.'

'Very pretty for him, indeed, and very convenient too,' said Mowbray; 'but pray, sir, what was to become of the honour of my family?'

'Why, what was the honour of your family to me?' said Touchwood; 'unless it was to recommend your family to my care, that I was disinherited on account of it. And if this Etherington, or Bulmer, had been a good fellow, I would have seen all the Mowbrays that ever wore broad cloth, at Jericho, before I had interfered.'

'I am really much indebted to your kindness,' said Mowbray angrily.

'More than you are aware of,' answered Touchwood; 'for, though I thought this Bulmer, even when declared illegitimate, might be a reasonable good match for your sister, considering the estate which was to accompany the union of their hands; yet now I have discovered him to be a scoundrel—every way a scoundrel—I would not wish any decent girl to marry him, were they to get all Yorkshire, instead of Nettlewood. So I have come to put you right.'

The strangeness of the news which Touchwood so bluntly communicated, made Mowbray's head turn round like that of a man who grows dizzy at finding himself on the verge of a precipice. Touchwood observed his consternation, which he willingly construed into an acknowledgement of his own brilliant genius.

'Take a glass of wine, Mr. Mowbray,' he said complacently; 'take a glass of old sherry—nothing like it for clearing the ideas—and do not be afraid of me, though I come thus suddenly upon you, with such surprising tidings—you will find me a plain, simple, ordinary man, that have my faults and my blunders, like other people. I acknowledge that much travel and experience have made me sometimes play the busybody, because I find I can do things better than other people, and I love to see folk stare—it's a way I have got. But, after all, I am *un bon diable*, as the Frenchman says; and here I have come four or five hundred miles to lie quiet among you all, and put all your

little matters to rights, just when you think they are most desperate.'

'I thank you for your good intentions,' said Mowbray; 'but I must needs say that they would have been more effectual had you been less cunning in my behalf, and frankly told me what you knew of Lord Etherington; as it is, the matter has gone fearfully far. I have promised him my sister—I have laid myself under personal obligations to him—and there are other reasons why I fear I must keep my word to this man, earl or no earl.'

'What!' exclaimed Touchwood, 'would you give up your sister to a worthless rascal, who is capable of robbing the post office, and of murdering his brother, because you have lost a trifle of money to him? Are you to let him go off triumphantly, because he is a gamester as well as a cheat? You are a pretty fellow, Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's—you are one of the happy sheep that go out for wool and come home shorn. Egad, you think yourself a millstone, and turn out a sack of grain—You flew abroad a hawk, and have come home a pigeon—You snarled at the Philistines, and they have drawn your eye-teeth with a vengeance!'

'This is all very witty, Mr. Touchwood,' replied Mowbray; 'but wit will not pay this man Etherington, or whatever he is, so many hundreds as I have lost to him.'

'Why, then, wealth must do what wit cannot,' said old Touchwood; 'I must advance for you, that is all. Look ye, sir, I do not go afoot for nothing—if I have laboured, I have reaped—and, like the fellow in the old play, "I have enough, and can maintain my humour"—it is not a few hundreds or thousands either can stand betwixt old P. S. Touchwood and his purpose; and my present purpose is to make you, Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's, a free man of the forest. You still look grave on it, young man? Why, I trust you are not such an ass as to think your dignity offended, because the plebeian Scrogie comes to the assistance of the terribly great and old house of Mowbray?'

'I am indeed not such a fool,' answered Mowbray, with his eyes still bent on the ground, 'to reject assistance that comes to me like a rope to a drowning man—but there is a circumstance'——he stopped short and drank a glass

of wine—'a circumstance to which it is most painful to me to allude—but you seem my friend—and I cannot intimate to you more strongly my belief in your professions of regard than by saying that the language held by Lady Penelope Penfeather on my sister's account renders it highly proper that she were settled in life; and I cannot but fear that the breaking off the affair with this man might be of great prejudice to her at this moment. They will have Nettlewood, and they may live separate—he has offered to make settlements to that effect, even on the very day of marriage. Her condition as a married woman will put her above scandal, and above necessity, from which, I am sorry to say, I cannot hope long to preserve her.'

'For shame!—for shame!—for shame!' said Touchwood, accumulating his words thicker than usual on each other; 'would you sell your own flesh and blood to a man like this Bulmer, whose character is now laid before you, merely because a disappointed old maid speaks scandal of her? A fine veneration you pay to the honoured name of Mowbray! If my poor, old, simple father had known what the owners of these two grand syllables could have stooped to do for merely ensuring subsistence, he would have thought as little of the noble Mowbrays as of the humble Scrogies. And, I dare say, the young lady is just such another—eager to get married—no matter to whom.'

'Excuse me, Mr. Touchwood,' answered Mowbray; 'my sister entertains sentiments so very different from what you ascribe to her, that she and I parted on the most unpleasant terms in consequence of my pressing this man's suit upon her. God knows that I only did so because I saw no other outlet from this most unpleasant dilemma. But since you are willing to interfere, sir, and aid me to disentangle these complicated matters, which have, I own, been made worse by my own rashness, I am ready to throw the matter completely into your hands, just as if you were my father arisen from the dead. Nevertheless, I must needs express my surprise at the extent of your intelligence in these affairs.'

'You speak very sensibly, young man,' said the traveller; 'and as for my intelligence, I have for some time known the finesses of this Master Bulmer as perfectly as if I had

been at his elbow when he was playing all his dog's tricks with this family. You would hardly suspect now,' he continued, in a confidential tone, 'that what you were so desirous a while ago should take place, has in some sense actually happened, and that the marriage ceremony has really passed betwixt your sister and this pretended Lord Etherington?'

'Have a care, sir!' said Mowbray fiercely; 'do not abuse my candour—this is no place, time, or subject for impertinent jesting.'

'As I live by bread, I am serious,' said Touchwood; 'Mr Cargill performed the ceremony; and there are two living witnesses who heard them say the words, "I, Clara, take you, Francis," or whatever the Scottish Church puts in place of that mystical formula.'

'It is impossible,' said Mowbray; 'Cargill dared not have done such a thing—a clandestine proceeding, such as you speak of, would have cost him his living. I'll bet my soul against a horse-shoe, it is all an imposition; and you come to disturb me, sir, amid my family distress, with legends that have no more truth in them than the Alkoran.'

'There are some true things in the Alkoran (or rather, the Koran, for the Al is merely the article prefixed), but let that pass—I will raise your wonder higher before I am done. It is very true, that your sister was indeed joined in marriage with this same Bulmer, that calls himself by the title of Etherington; but it is just as true, that the marriage is not worth a maravedi, for she believed him at the time to be another person—to be, in a word, Francis Tyrrel, who is actually what the other pretends to be, a nobleman of fortune.'

'I cannot understand one word of all this,' said Mowbray. 'I must to my sister instantly, and demand of her if there be any real foundation for these wonderful averments.'

'Do not go,' said Touchwood, detaining him, 'you shall have a full explanation from me; and, to comfort you under your perplexity, I can assure you that Cargill's consent to celebrate the nuptials, was only obtained by an aspersion thrown on your sister's character, which induced him to believe that speedy marriage would be the

sole means of saving her reputation ; and I am convinced in my own mind it is only the revival of this report which has furnished the foundation of Lady Penelope's chattering.'

'If I could think so,'—said Mowbray, 'if I could but think this is truth—and it seems to explain, in some degree, my sister's mysterious conduct—if I could but think it true, I should fall down and worship you as an angel from heaven !'

'A proper sort of angel,' said Touchwood, looking modestly down on his short, sturdy supporters—'Did you ever hear of an angel in boot-hose ? Or do you suppose angels are sent to wait on broken-down horse-jockeys ?'

'Call me what you will, Mr. Touchwood,' said the young man ; 'only make out your story true, and my sister innocent !'

'Very well spoken, sir,' answered the senior, 'very well spoken ! But then I understand, you are to be guided by my prudence and experience ? None of your G— damme doings, sir—your duels or your drubbings. Let *me* manage the affair for you, and I will bring you through with a flowing sail.'

'Sir, I must feel as a gentleman,' said Mowbray.

'Feel as a fool,' said Touchwood, 'for that is the true case. Nothing would please this Bulmer better than to fight through his rogueries—he knows very well that he who can slit a pistol-ball on the edge of a penknife, will always preserve some sort of reputation amidst his scoundrelism —but I shall take care to stop that hole. Sit down—be a man of sense, and listen to the whole of this strange story.'

Mowbray sat down accordingly ; and Touchwood, in his own way, and with many characteristic interjectional remarks, gave him an account of the early loves of Clara and Tyrrel—of the reasons which induced Bulmer at first to encourage their correspondence, in hopes that his brother would, by a clandestine marriage, altogether ruin himself with his father—of the change which took place in his views when he perceived the importance annexed by the old earl to the union of Miss Mowbray with his apparent heir—of the desperate stratagem which he endeavoured to play off, by substituting himself in the room of his brother—and all the consequences, which it is unnecessary to resume

here, as they are detailed at length by the perpetrator himself, in his correspondence with Captain Jekyl.

When the whole communication was ended, Mowbray, almost stupefied by the wonders he had heard, remained for some time in a sort of reverie, from which he only started to ask what evidence could be produced of a story so strange.

'The evidence,' answered Touchwood, 'of one who was a deep agent in all these matters, from first to last—as complete a rogue, I believe, as the devil himself, with this difference, that our mortal fiend does not, I believe, do evil for the sake of evil, but for the sake of the profit which attends it. How far this plea will avail him in a court of conscience, I cannot tell; but his disposition was so far akin to humanity, that I have always found my old acquaintance as ready to do good as harm, providing he had the same *agio* upon the transaction.'

'On my soul,' said Mowbray, 'you must mean Solmes! whom I have long suspected to be a deep villain—and now he proves traitor to boot. How the devil could you get into his intimacy, Mr. Touchwood?'

'The case was particular,' said Touchwood. 'Mr. Solmes, too active a member of the community to be satisfied with managing the affairs which his master entrusted to him, adventured in a little business on his own account; and thinking, I suppose, that the late Earl of Etherington had forgotten fully to acknowledge his services, as valet to his son, he supplied that defect by a small cheque on our house for £100, in name, and bearing the apparent signature, of the deceased. This small mistake being detected, Mr. Solmes, *porteur* of the little billet, would have been consigned to the custody of a Bow Street officer, but that I found means to relieve him, on condition of his making known to me the points of private history which I have just been communicating to you. What I had known of Tyrrel at Smyrna had given me much interest in him, and you may guess it was not lessened by the distresses which he had sustained through his brother's treachery. By this fellow's means, I have counterplotted all his master's fine schemes. For example, as soon as I learned Bulmer was coming down here, I contrived to give Tyrrel an anonymous hint, well knowing he would set off

like the devil to thwart him, and so I should have the whole dramatis personae together, and play them all off against each other, after my own pleasure.'

'In that case,' said Mr. Mowbray, 'your expedient brought about the rencontre between the two brothers, when both might have fallen.'

'Can't deny it—can't deny it,' answered Scrogie, a little discountenanced—'a mere accident—no one can guard every point. Egad, but I had like to have been baffled again, for Bulmer sent the lad Jekyl, who is not such a black sheep neither but what there are some white hairs about him, upon a treaty with Tyrrel, that my secret agent was not admitted to. Gad, but I discovered the whole—you will scarce guess how.'

'Probably not easily, indeed, sir,' answered Mowbray; 'for your sources of intelligence are not the most obvious, any more than your mode of acting the most simple or most comprehensible.'

'I would not have it so,' said Touchwood; 'simple men perish in their simplicity—I carry my eye-teeth about me. And for my source of information—why, I played the eavesdropper, sir—listened—knew my landlady's cupboard with the double door—got into it as she has done many a time. Such a fine gentleman as you would rather cut a man's throat, I suppose, than listen at a cupboard door, though the object were to prevent murder.'

'I cannot say I should have thought of the expedient, certainly, sir,' said Mowbray.

'I did though,' said Scrogie, 'and learned enough of what was going on, to give Jekyl a hint that sickened him of his commission, I believe—so the game is all in my own hands. Bulmer has no one to trust to but Solmes, and Solmes tells me everything.'

Here Mowbray could not suppress a movement of impatience.

'I wish to God, sir, that since you were so kind as to interest yourself in affairs so intimately concerning my family, you had been pleased to act with a little more openness towards me. Here I have been for weeks the intimate of a damned scoundrel, whose throat I ought to have cut for his scandalous conduct to my sister. Here

have I been rendering her and myself miserable, and getting myself cheated every night by a swindler, whom you, if it had been your pleasure, could have unmasked by a single word. I do all justice to your intentions, sir; but, upon my soul, I cannot help wishing you had conducted yourself with more frankness and less mystery; and I am truly afraid your love of dexterity has been too much for your ingenuity, and that you have suffered matters to run into such a skein of confusion, as you yourself will find difficulty in unravelling.'

Touchwood smiled, and shook his head in all the conscious pride of superior understanding. 'Young man,' he said, 'when you have seen a little of the world, and especially beyond the bounds of this narrow island, you will find much more art and dexterity necessary in conducting these businesses to an issue, than occurs to a blind John Bull, or a raw Scottishman. You will be then no stranger to the policy of life, which deals in mining and countermining —now in making feints, now in thrusting with forthright passes. I look upon you, Mr. Mowbray, as a young man spoiled by staying at home, and keeping bad company; and will make it my business, if you submit yourself to my guidance, to inform your understanding, so as to retrieve your estate. Don't—don't answer me, sir! because I know too well, by experience, how young men answer on these subjects—they are conceited, sir, as conceited as if they had been in all the four quarters of the world. I hate to be answered, sir, I hate it. And, to tell you the truth, it is because Tyrrel has a fancy of answering me, that I rather make you my confidant on this occasion, than him. I would have had him throw himself into myarms, and under my directions; but he hesitated—he hesitated, Mr. Mowbray —and I despise hesitation. If he thinks he has wit enough to manage his own matters, let him try it—let him try it. Not but I will do all that I can for him, in fitting time and place; but I will let him dwell in his perplexities and uncertainties for a little while longer. And so, Mr. Mowbray, you see what sort of an odd fellow I am, and you can satisfy me at once whether you mean to come into my measures —only speak out at once, sir, for I abhor hesitation.'

While Touchwood thus spoke, Mowbray was forming

his resolution internally. He was not so inexperienced as the senior supposed; at least, he could plainly see that he had to do with an obstinate, capricious old man, who, with the best intentions in the world, chose to have everything in his own way; and like most petty politicians, was disposed to throw intrigue and mystery over matters which had much better be prosecuted boldly and openly. But he perceived, at the same time, that Touchwood, as a sort of relation, wealthy, childless, and disposed to become his friend, was a person to be conciliated, the rather that the traveller himself had frankly owned that it was Francis Tyrrel's want of deference towards him which had forfeited, or at least abated, his favour. Mowbray recollected, also, that the circumstances under which he himself stood, did not permit him to trifle with returning gleams of good fortune. Subduing, therefore, the haughtiness of temper proper to him as only son and heir, he answered respectfully that, in his condition, the advice and assistance of Mr. Scrogie Touchwood were too important not to be purchased at the price of submitting his own judgement to that of an experienced and sagacious friend.

'Well said, Mr. Mowbray,' replied the senior, 'well said. Let me once have the management of your affairs, and we will brush them up for you without loss of time. I must be obliged to you for a bed for the night, however—it is as dark as a wolf's mouth; and if you will give orders to keep the poor devil of a postilion, and his horses too, why, I will be the more obliged to you.'

Mowbray applied himself to the bell. Patrick answered the call, and was much surprised when the old gentleman, taking the word out of his entertainer's mouth, desired a bed to be got ready, with a little fire in the grate; 'for I take it, friend,' he went on 'you have not guests here very often. And see that my sheets be not damp, and bid the housemaid take care not to make the bed upon an exact level, but let it slope from the pillow to the footposts, at a declivity of about eighteen inches. And hark ye—get me a jug of barley-water, to place by my bedside, with the squeeze of a lemon—or stay, you will make it as sour as Beelzebub—bring the lemon on a saucer, and I will mix it myself.'

Patrick listened like one of sense forlorn, his head turning like a mandarin, alternately from the speaker to his master, as if to ask the latter whether this was all reality. The instant that Touchwood stopped, Mowbray added his fiat.

'Let everything be done to make Mr. Touchwood comfortable, in the way he wishes.'

'Aweel, sir,' said Patrick, 'I shall tell Mally, to be sure, and we maun do our best, and—but it 's unco late'——

'And therefore,' said Touchwood, 'the sooner we get to bed the better, my old friend. I, for one, must be stirring early—I have business of life and death—it concerns you too, Mr. Mowbray—but no more of that till to-morrow. And let the lad put up his horses, and get him a bed somewhere.'

Patrick here thought he had gotten upon firm ground for resistance, for which, displeased with the dictatorial manner of the stranger, he felt considerably inclined.

'Ye may catch us at that, if ye can,' said Patrick; 'there 's nae post-cattle come into our stables—What do we ken, but that they may be glandered, as the groom says?'

'We must take the risk to-night, Patrick,' said Mowbray, reluctantly enough—'unless Mr. Touchwood will permit the horses to come back early next morning?'

'Not I, indeed,' said Touchwood; 'safe bind safe find—it may be once away and ay away, and we shall have enough to do to-morrow morning. Moreover, the poor carrion are tired, and the merciful man is merciful to his beast—and, in a word, if the horses go back to Saint Ronan's Well to-night, I go there for company.'

It often happens, owing, I suppose, to the perversity of human nature, that subserviency in trifles is more difficult to a proud mind, than compliance in matters of more importance. Mowbray, like other young gentlemen of his class, was finically rigid in his stable discipline, and even Lord Etherington's horses had not been admitted into that *sanctum sanctorum*, into which he now saw himself obliged to induct two wretched post-hacks. But he submitted with the best grace he could; and Patrick, while he left their presence, with lifted-up hands and eyes, to execute

the orders he had received, could scarcely help thinking that the old man must be the devil in disguise, since he could thus suddenly control his fiery master, even in the points which he had hitherto seemed to consider as of most vital importance.

'The Lord in his mercy haud a grip of this puir family! for I, that was born in it, am like to see the end of it.' Thus ejaculated Patrick.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE WANDERER

'Tis a naughty night to swim in.—*King Lear.*

THERE was a wild uncertainty about Mowbray's ideas, after he started from a feverish sleep on the morning succeeding this memorable interview, that his sister, whom he really loved as much as he was capable of loving anything, had dishonoured him and her name; and the horrid recollection of their last interview was the first idea which his waking imagination was thrilled with. Then came Touchwood's tale of exculpation—and he persuaded himself, or strove to do so, that Clara must have understood the charge he had brought against her as referring to her attachment to Tyrrel, and its fatal consequences. Again, still he doubted how that could be—still feared that there must be more behind than her reluctance to confess the fraud which had been practised on her by Bulmer; and then, again, he strengthened himself in the first and more pleasing opinion, by recollecting that, averse as she was to espouse the person he proposed to her, it must have appeared to her the completion of ruin, if he, Mowbray, should obtain knowledge of the clandestine marriage.

'Yes—O yes,' he said to himself, 'she would think that this story would render me more eager in the rascal's interest, as the best way of hushing up such a discreditable affair—faith, and she would have judged right too; for, had he actually been Lord Etherington, I do not see what else she could have done. But, not being Lord Etherington, and an anointed scoundrel into the bargain, I will content

myself with cudgelling him to death so soon as I can get out of the guardianship of this old, meddling, obstinate, self-willed busybody. Then, what is to be done for Clara ? This mock marriage was a mere bubble, and both parties must draw stakes. She likes this grave don, who proves to be the stick of the right tree, after all—so do not I, though there be something lordlike about him. I was sure a strolling painter could not have carried it off so. She may marry him, I suppose, if the law is not against it—then she has the earldom, and the Oaklands, and Nettlewood, all at once. Gad, we should come in winners, after all—and, I dare say, this old boy Touchwood is as rich as a Jew—worth a hundred thousand at least—He is too peremptory to be cut up for sixpence under a hundred thousand. And he talks of putting me to rights—I must not wince—must stand still to be curried a little—Only, I wish the law may permit Clara's being married to this other earl. A woman cannot marry two brothers, that is certain ;—but, then, if she is not married to the one of them in good and lawful form, there can be no bar to her marrying the other, I should think—I hope the lawyers will talk no nonsense about it—I hope Clara will have no foolish scruples. But, by my word, the first thing I have to hope is, that the thing is true, for it comes through but a suspicious channel. I'll away to Clara instantly—get the truth out of her—and consider what is to be done.'

Thus partly thought and partly spoke the young Laird of Saint Ronan's hastily dressing himself, in order to inquire into the strange chaos of events which perplexed his imagination.

When he came down to the parlour where they had supped last night, and where breakfast was prepared this morning, he sent for a girl who acted as his sister's immediate attendant, and asked 'if Miss Mowbray was yet stirring ?'

The girl answered, 'she had not rung her bell.'

'It is past her usual hour,' said Mowbray, 'but she was disturbed last night. Go, Martha, tell her to get up instantly —say I have excellent good news for her—or, if her head aches, I will come and tell them to her before she rises—go like lightning.'

Martha went, and returned in a minute or two. 'I cannot make my mistress hear, sir, knock as loud as I will. I wish,' she added, with that love of evil presage which is common in the lower ranks, 'that Miss Clara may be well, for I never knew her sleep so sound.'

Mowbray jumped from the chair into which he had thrown himself, ran through the gallery, and knocked smartly at his sister's door; there was no answer. 'Clara, dear Clara! Answer me but one word—say but you are well. I frightened you last night—I had been drinking wine—I was violent—forgive me! Come, do not be sulky—speak but a single word—say but you are well.'

He made the pauses longer betwixt every branch of his address, knocked sharper and louder, listened more anxiously for an answer; at length he attempted to open the door, but found it locked, or otherwise secured. 'Does Miss Mowbray always lock her door?' he asked the girl.

'Never knew her do it before, sir; she leaves it open that I may call her, and open the window-shutters.'

She had too good reason for precaution last night, thought her brother, and then remembered having heard her bar the door.

'Come, Clara,' he continued, greatly agitated, 'do not be silly; if you will not open the door, I must force it, that 's all; for how can I tell but that you are sick, and unable to answer?—if you are only sullen, say so. She returns no answer,' he said, turning to the domestic, who was now joined by Touchwood.

Mowbray's anxiety was so great, that it prevented his taking any notice of his guest, and he proceeded to say, without regarding his presence, 'What is to be done?—she may be sick—she may be asleep—she may have swooned; if I force the door, it may terrify her to death in the present weak state of her nerves. Clara, dear Clara! do but speak a single word, and you shall remain in your own room as long as you please.'

There was no answer. Miss Mowbray's maid, hitherto too much fluttered and alarmed to have much presence of mind, now recollected a back-stair which communicated with her mistress's room from the garden, and suggested she might have gone out that way.

'Gone out,' said Mowbray, in great anxiety, and looking at the heavy fog, or rather small rain, which blotted the November morning,—'Gone out, and in weather like this! But we may get into her room from the back-stair.'

So saying, and leaving his guest to follow or remain as he thought proper, he flew rather than walked to the garden, and found the private door which led into it, from the bottom of the back-stair above mentioned, was wide open. Full of vague, but fearful apprehensions, he rushed up to the door of his sister's apartment, which opened from her dressing-room to the landing-place of the stair; it was ajar, and that which communicated betwixt the bedroom and dressing-room was half open. 'Clara, Clara!' exclaimed Mowbray, invoking her name rather in an agony of apprehension than as any longer hoping for a reply. And his apprehension was but too prophetic.

Miss Mowbray was not in that apartment; and, from the order in which it was found, it was plain she had neither undressed on the preceding night, nor occupied the bed. Mowbray struck his forehead in an agony of remorse and fear. 'I have terrified her to death,' he said; 'she has fled into the woods, and perished there!'

Under the influence of this apprehension, Mowbray, after another hasty glance around the apartment, as if to assure himself that Clara was not there, rushed again into the dressing-room, almost overturning the traveller, who, in civility, had not ventured to enter the inner apartment. 'You are as mad as a *Hamako*,'[1] said the traveller; 'let us consult together, and I am sure I can contrive'——

'Oh, d—n your contrivance!' said Mowbray, forgetting all proposed respect in his natural impatience, aggravated by his alarm; 'if you had behaved straightforward, and like a man of common sense, this would not have happened!'

'God forgive you, young man, if your reflections are unjust,' said the traveller, quitting the hold he had laid upon Mowbray's coat; 'and God forgive me too, if I have done wrong while endeavouring to do for the best! But may not Miss Mowbray have gone down to the Well? I will order my horses, and set off instantly.'

[1] A fool is so termed in Turkey.

'Do, do,' said Mowbray recklessly; 'I thank you;' and hastily traversing the garden, as if desirous to get rid at once of his visitor and his own thoughts, he took the shortest road to a little postern-gate, which led into the extensive copsewood, through some part of which Clara had caused a walk to be cut to a little summer-house built of rough shingles, covered with creeping shrubs.

As Mowbray hastened through the garden, he met the old man by whom it was kept, a native of the south country, and an old dependant on the family. 'Have you seen my sister?' said Mowbray, hurrying his words on each other with the eagerness of terror.

'What 's your wull, St. Ronan's?' answered the old man, at once dull of hearing and slow of apprehension.

'Have you seen Miss Clara?' shouted Mowbray, and muttered an oath or two at the gardener's stupidity.

'In troth have I,' replied the gardener deliberately; 'what suld ail me to see Miss Clara, St. Ronan's?'

'When, and where?' eagerly demanded the querist.

'Ou, just yestreen, after tey-time—afore ye cam hame yoursell galloping sae fast,' said Joseph.

'I am as stupid as he, to put off my time in speaking to such an old cabbage-stock,' said Mowbray, and hastened on to the postern-gate already mentioned, leading from the garden to what was usually called Miss Clara's walk. Two or three domestics, whispering to each other, and with countenances that showed grief, fear, and suspicion, followed their master, desirous to be employed, yet afraid to force their services on the fiery young man.

At the little postern he found some traces of her he sought. The pass-key of Clara was left in the lock. It was then plain that she must have passed that way; but at what hour, or for what purpose, Mowbray dared not conjecture. The path, after running a quarter of a mile or more through an open grove of oaks and sycamores, attained the verge of the large brook, and became there steep and rocky, difficult to the infirm, and alarming to the nervous; often approaching the brink of a precipitous ledge of rock, which in this place overhung the stream, in some places brawling and foaming in hasty current, and in others seeming to slumber in deep and circular eddies. The temptations which this

dangerous scene must have offered an excited and desperate spirit, came on Mowbray like the blight of the simoom, and he stood a moment to gather breath and overcome these horrible anticipations, ere he was able to proceed. His attendants felt the same apprehension. 'Puir thing—puir thing! Oh, God send she may not have been left to hersell! God send she may have been upholden!' were whispered by Patrick to the maidens, and by them to each other.

At this moment the old gardener was heard behind them, shouting, 'Master—St. Ronan's—Master—I have fund—I have fund'——

'Have you found my sister?' exclaimed the brother, with breathless anxiety.

The old man did not answer till he came up, and then, with his usual slowness of delivery, he replied to his master's repeated inquiries, 'Na, I haena fund Miss Clara, but I hae fund something ye wad be wae to lose—your braw hunting-knife.'

He put the implement into the hand of its owner, who, recollecting the circumstances under which he had flung it from him last night, and now too probable consequences of that interview, bestowed on it a deep imprecation, and again hurled it from him into the brook. The domestics looked at each other, and recollecting each at the same time that the knife was a favourite tool of their master, who was rather curious in such articles, had little doubt that his mind was affected, in a temporary way at least, by his anxiety on his sister's account. He saw their confused and inquisitive looks, and assuming as much composure and presence of mind as he could command, directed Martha and her female companions to return and search the walks on the other side of Shaws Castle; and, finally, ordered Patrick back to ring the bell, 'which,' he said, assuming a confidence that he was far from entertaining, 'might call Miss Mowbray home from some of her long walks.' He further desired his groom and horses might meet him at the Clattering Brig, so called from a noisy cascade which was formed by the brook, above which was stretched a small foot-bridge of planks. Having thus shaken off his attendants, he proceeded himself, with all the speed he

was capable of exerting, to follow out the path in which he was at present engaged, which, being a favourite walk with his sister, she might perhaps have adopted from mere habit, when in a state of mind, which, he had too much reason to fear, must have put choice out of the question.

He soon reached the summer-house, which was merely a seat covered overhead and on the sides, open in front, and neatly paved with pebbles. This little bower was perched, like a hawk's nest, almost upon the edge of a projecting crag, the highest point of the line of rock which we have noticed; and had been selected by poor Clara, on account of the prospect which it commanded down the valley. One of her gloves lay on the small rustic table in the summer-house. Mowbray caught it eagerly up. It was drenched with wet—the preceding day had been dry; so that, had she forgot it there in the morning, or in the course of the day, it could not have been in that state. She had certainly been there during the night, when it rained heavily.

Mowbray, thus assured that Clara had been in this place, while her passions and fears were so much afloat as they must have been at her flight from her father's house, cast a hurried and terrified glance from the brow of the precipice into the deep stream that eddied below. It seemed to him that, in the sullen roar of the water, he heard the last groans of his sister—the foam-flakes caught his eye as if they were a part of her garments. But a closer examination showed that there was no appearance of such a catastrophe. Descending the path on the other side of the bower, he observed a footprint in a place where the clay was moist and tenacious, which, from the small size and the shape of the shoe, it appeared to him must be a trace of her whom he sought. He hurried forward, therefore, with as much speed as yet permitted him to look out keenly for similar impressions, of which it seemed to him he remarked several, although less perfect than the former, being much obliterated by the quantity of rain that had since fallen,—a circumstance seeming to prove that several hours had elapsed since the person had passed.

At length, through the various turnings and windings of

a long and romantic path, Mowbray found himself, without having received any satisfactory intelligence, by the side of the brook called Saint Ronan's Burn, at the place where it was crossed by foot-passengers, by the Clattering Brig, and by horsemen through a ford a little lower. At this point the fugitive might have either continued her wanderings through her paternal woods, by a path which, after winding about a mile, returned to Shaws Castle, or she might have crossed the bridge, and entered a broken horseway, common to the public, leading to the Aultoun of Saint Ronan's.

Mowbray, after a moment's consideration, concluded that the last was her most probable option. He mounted his horse, which the groom had brought down according to order, and, commanding the man to return by the foot-path, which he himself could not examine, he proceeded to ride towards the ford. The brook was swollen during the night, and the groom could not forbear intimating to his master that there was considerable danger in attempting to cross it. But Mowbray's mind and feelings were too high-strung to permit him to listen to cautious counsel. He spurred the snorting and reluctant horse into the torrent, though the water, rising high on the upper side, broke both over the pummel and the croupe of his saddle. It was by exertion of great strength and sagacity that the good horse kept the ford-way. Had the stream forced him down among the rocks which lie below the crossing-place, the consequences must have been fatal. Mowbray, however, reached the opposite side in safety, to the joy and admiration of the servant, who stood staring at him during the adventure. He then rode hastily towards the Aultoun, determined, if he could not hear tidings of his sister in that village, that he would spread the alarm, and institute a general search after her, since her elopement from Shaws Castle could, in that case, no longer be concealed. We must leave him, however, in his present state of uncertainty, in order to acquaint our readers with the reality of those evils which his foreboding mind and disturbed conscience could only anticipate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE CATASTROPHE

> What sheeted ghost is wandering through the storm ?
> For never did a maid of middle earth
> Choose such a time or spot to vent her sorrows.
>
> *Old Play.*

GRIEF, shame, confusion, and terror, had contributed to overwhelm the unfortunate Clara Mowbray, at the moment when she parted with her brother, after the stormy and dangerous interview which it was our task to record in a former chapter. For years, her life, her whole tenor of thought, had been haunted by the terrible apprehension of a discovery, and now the thing which she feared had come upon her. The extreme violence of her brother, which went so far as to menace her personal safety, had united with the previous conflict of passions to produce a rapture of fear, which probably left her no other free agency than that which she derived from the blind instinct which urges flight, as the readiest resource in danger.

We have no means of exactly tracing the course of this unhappy young woman. It is probable she fled from Shaws Castle, on hearing the arrival of Mr. Touchwood's carriage, which she might mistake for that of Lord Etherington ; and thus, while Mowbray was looking forward to the happier prospects which the traveller's narrative seemed to open, his sister was contending with rain and darkness, amidst the difficulties and dangers of the mountain-path which we have described. These were so great, that a young woman more delicately brought up must either have lain down exhausted, or have been compelled to turn her steps back to the residence she had abandoned. But the solitary wanderings of Clara had inured her to fatigue and to night-walks ; and the deeper causes of terror which urged her to flight, rendered her insensible to the perils of her way. She had passed the bower, as was evident from her glove remaining there, and had crossed the foot-bridge ; although it was almost wonderful that, in so dark a night, she should

have followed with such accuracy a track, where the missing a single turn by a cubit's length might have precipitated her into eternity.

It is probable that Clara's spirits and strength began in some degree to fail her, after she had proceeded a little way on the road to the Aultoun ; for she had stopped at the solitary cottage inhabited by the old female pauper who had been for a time the hostess of the penitent and dying Hannah Irwin. Here, as the inmate of the cottage acknowledged, she had made some knocking, and she owned she had heard her moan bitterly, as she entreated for admission. The old hag was one of those whose hearts adversity turns to very stone, and obstinately kept her door shut, impelled more probably by general hatred to the human race than by the superstitious fears which seized her ; although she perversely argued that she was startled at the supernatural melody and sweetness of tone with which the benighted wanderer made her supplication. She admitted that when she heard the poor petitioner turn from the door, her heart was softened, and she did intend to open with the purpose of offering her at least a shelter ; but that before she could 'hirple to the door, and get the bar taken down,' the unfortunate supplicant was not to be seen ; which strengthened the old woman's opinion that the whole was a delusion of Satan.

It is conjectured that the repulsed wanderer made no other attempt to awaken pity or obtain shelter until she came to Mr. Cargill's manse, in the upper room of which a light was still burning, owing to a cause which requires some explanation.

The reader is aware of the reasons which induced Bulmer, or the titular Lord Etherington, to withdraw from the country the sole witness, as he conceived, who could, or at least who might choose, to bear witness to the fraud which he had practised on the unfortunate Clara Mowbray. Of three persons present at the marriage, besides the parties, the clergyman was completely deceived. Solmes he conceived to be at his own exclusive devotion ; and therefore, if by his means this Hannah Irwin could be removed from the scene, he argued plausibly that all evidence to the treachery which he had practised would

be effectually stifled. Hence his agent, Solmes, had received a commission, as the reader may remember, to effect her removal without loss of time, and had reported to his master that his efforts had been effectual.

But Solmes, since he had fallen under the influence of Touchwood, was constantly employed in counteracting the schemes which he seemed most active in forwarding, while the traveller enjoyed (to him an exquisite gratification) the amusement of countermining as fast as Bulmer could mine, and had in prospect the pleasing anticipation of blowing up the pioneer with his own petard. For this purpose, as soon as Touchwood learned that his house was to be applied to for the original deeds left in charge by the deceased Earl of Etherington, he expedited a letter, directing that only the copies should be sent, and thus rendered nugatory Bulmer's desperate design of possessing himself of that evidence. For the same reason, when Solmes announced to him his master's anxious wish to have Hannah Irwin conveyed out of the country, he appointed him to cause the sick woman to be carefully transported to the manse, where Mr. Cargill was easily induced to give her temporary refuge.

To this good man, who might be termed an Israelite without guile, the distress of the unhappy woman would have proved a sufficient recommendation; nor was he likely to have inquired whether her malady might not be infectious, or to have made any of those other previous investigations which are sometimes clogs upon the bounty or hospitality of more prudent philanthropists. But, to interest him yet further, Mr. Touchwood informed him by letter that the patient (not otherwise unknown to him) was possessed of certain most material information affecting a family of honour and consequence, and that he himself, with Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's in the quality of a magistrate, intended to be at the manse that evening, to take her declaration upon this important subject. Such, indeed, was the traveller's purpose, which might have been carried into effect, but for his own self-important love of manœuvring on the one part, and the fiery impatience of Mowbray on the other, which, as the reader knows, sent the one at full gallop to Shaws Castle, and obliged the other

to follow him post haste. This necessity he intimated to the clergyman by a note, which he dispatched express as he himself was in the act of stepping into the chaise.

He requested that the most particular attention should be paid to the invalid—promised to be at the manse with Mr. Mowbray early on the morrow—and, with the lingering and inveterate self-conceit which always induced him to conduct everything with his own hand, directed his friend, Mr. Cargill, not to proceed to take the sick woman's declaration or confession until he arrived, unless in case of extremity.

It had been an easy matter for Solmes to transfer the invalid from the wretched cottage to the clergyman's manse. The first appearance of the associate of much of her guilt had indeed terrified her; but he scrupled not to assure her that his penitence was equal to her own, and that he was conveying her where their joint deposition would be formally received, in order that they might, so far as possible, atone for the evil of which they had been jointly guilty. He also promised her kind usage for herself, and support for her children; and she willingly accompanied him to the clergyman's residence, he himself resolving to abide in concealment the issue of the mystery, without again facing his master, whose star, as he well discerned, was about to shoot speedily from its exalted sphere.

The clergyman visited the unfortunate patient, as he had done frequently during her residence in his vicinity, and desired that she might be carefully attended. During the whole day she seemed better; but, whether the means of supporting her exhausted frame had been too liberally administered, or whether the thoughts which gnawed her conscience had returned with double severity when she was released from the pressure of immediate want, it is certain that, about midnight, the fever began to gain ground, and the person placed in attendance on her came to inform the clergyman, then deeply engaged with the siege of Ptolemais, that she doubted if the woman would live till morning, and that she had something lay heavy at her heart, which she wished, as the emissary expressed it, 'to make a clean breast of' before she died, or lost possession of her senses.

Awakened by such a crisis, Mr. Cargill at once became a man of this world, clear in his apprehension, and cool in his resolution, as he always was when the path of duty lay before him. Comprehending, from the various hints of his friend Touchwood, that the matter was of the last consequence, his own humanity, as well as inexperience, dictated his sending for skilful assistance. His man-servant was accordingly dispatched on horseback to the Well for Doctor Quackleben; while, upon the suggestion of one of his maids, 'that Mrs. Dods was an uncommon skeely body about a sick-bed,' the wench was dismissed to supplicate the assistance of the gudewife of the Cleikum, which she was not, indeed, wont to refuse whenever it could be useful. The male emissary proved, in Scottish phrase, a 'corbie messenger'; for either he did not find the doctor, or he found him better engaged than to attend the sick-bed of a pauper, at a request which promised such slight remuneration as that of a parish minister. But the female ambassador was more successful; for, though she found our friend Luckie Dods preparing for bed at an hour unusually late, in consequence of some anxiety on account of Mr. Touchwood's unexpected absence, the good old dame only growled a little about the minister's fancies in taking puir bodies into his own house; and then, instantly donning cloak, hood, and pattens, marched down the gate with all the speed of the good Samaritan, one maid bearing the lamp before her, while the other remained to keep the house, and to attend to the wants of Mr. Tyrrel, who engaged willingly to sit up to receive Mr. Touchwood.

But ere Dame Dods had arrived at the manse, the patient had summoned Mr. Cargill to her presence, and required him to write her confession while she had life and breath to make it.

'For I believe,' she added, raising herself in the bed, and rolling her eyes wildly around, 'that, were I to confess my guilt to one of a less sacred character, the Evil Spirit, whose servant I have been, would carry away his prey, both body and soul, before they had severed from each other, however short the space that they must remain in partnership!'

Mr. Cargill would have spoken some ghostly consolation,

but she answered with pettish impatience, 'Waste not words—waste not words! Let me speak that which I must tell, and sign it with my hand: and do you, as the more immediate servant of God, and therefore bound to bear witness to the truth, take heed you write that which I tell you, and nothing else. I desired to have told this to St. Ronan's—I have even made some progress in telling it to others—but I am glad I broke short off—for I know you, Josiah Cargill, though you have long forgotten me.'

'It may be so,' said Cargill. 'I indeed have no recollection of you.'

'You once knew Hannah Irwin, though,' said the sick woman; 'who was companion and relation to Miss Clara Mowbray, and who was present with her on that sinful night, when she was wedded in the kirk of Saint Ronan's.'

'Do you mean to say that you are that person?' said Cargill, holding the candle so as to throw some light on the face of the sick woman. 'I cannot believe it.'

'No?' replied the penitent; 'there is indeed a difference between wickedness in the act of carrying through its successful machinations, and wickedness surrounded by all the horrors of a death-bed!'

'Do not yet despair,' said Cargill. 'Grace is omnipotent—to doubt this is in itself a great crime.'

'Be it so! I cannot help it—my heart is hardened, Mr. Cargill; and there is something here,' she pressed her bosom, 'which tells me, that, with prolonged life and renewed health, even my present agonies would be forgotten, and I should become the same I have been before. I have rejected the offer of grace, Mr. Cargill, and not through ignorance, for I have sinned with my eyes open. Care not for me, then, who am a mere outcast.' He again endeavoured to interrupt her, but she continued, 'Or if you really wish my welfare, let me relieve my bosom of that which presses it, and it may be that I shall then be better able to listen to you. You say you remember me not—but if I tell you how often you refused to perform in secret the office which was required of you—how much you urged that it was against your canonical rules—if I name the argument to which you yielded—and remind you of your purpose, to acknowledge your transgression to

your brethren in the church courts, to plead your excuse, and submit to their censure, which you said could not be a light one—you will be then aware, that, in the voice of the miserable pauper, you hear the words of the once artful, gay, and specious Hannah Irwin.'

'I allow it, I allow it!' said Mr. Cargill; 'I admit the tokens, and believe you to be indeed her whose name you assume.'

'Then one painful step is over,' said she; 'for I would ere now have lightened my conscience by confession, saving for the cursed pride of spirit, which was ashamed of poverty, though it had not shrunk from guilt. Well, in these arguments, which were urged to you by a youth best known to you by the name of Francis Tyrrel, though more properly entitled to that of Valentine Bulmer, we practised on you a base and gross deception. Did you not hear some one sigh?—I hope there is no one in the room. I trust I shall die when my confession is signed and sealed, without my name being dragged through the public. I hope ye bring not in your menials to gaze on my abject misery—I cannot brook that.'

She paused and listened; for the ear, usually deafened by pain, is sometimes, on the contrary, rendered morbidly acute. Mr. Cargill assured her there was no one present but himself. 'But, oh, most unhappy woman!' he said, 'what does your introduction prepare me to expect?'

'Your expectation, be it never so ominous, shall be fully satisfied. I was the guilty confidant of the false Francis Tyrrel. Clara loved the true one. When the fatal ceremony passed, the bride and the clergyman were deceived alike, and I was the wretch—the fiend—who, aiding another yet blacker, if blacker could be, mainly helped to accomplish this cureless misery!'

'Wretch!' exclaimed the clergyman, 'and had you not then done enough? Why did you expose the betrothed of one brother to become the wife of another?'

'I acted,' said the sick woman, 'only as Bulmer instructed me; but I had to do with a master of the game. He contrived, by his agent Solmes, to match me with a husband imposed on me by his devices as a man of fortune—a wretch, who maltreated me, plundered me, sold me.

Oh! if fiends laugh, as I have heard they can, what a jubilee of scorn will there be, when Bulmer and I enter their place of torture! Hark! I am sure of it—some one draws breath, as if shuddering!'

'You will distract yourself if you give way to these fancies. Be calm—speak on—but, oh! at last, and for once, speak the truth!'

'I will, for it will best gratify my hatred against him who, having first robbed me of my virtue, made me a sport and a plunder to the basest of the species. For that I wandered here to unmask him. I had heard he again stirred his suit to Clara, and I came here to tell young Mowbray the whole. But do you wonder that I shrank from doing so till this last decisive moment? I thought of my conduct to Clara, and how could I face her brother? And yet I hated her not after I learned her utter wretchedness—her deep misery, verging even upon madness—I hated her not then. I was sorry that she was not to fall to the lot of a better man than Bulmer; and I pitied her after she was rescued by Tyrrel, and you may remember it was I who prevailed on you to conceal her marriage.'

'I remember it,' answered Cargill, 'and that you alleged, as a reason for secrecy, danger from her family. I did conceal it, until reports that she was again to be married reached my ears.'

'Well, then,' said the sick woman, 'Clara Mowbray ought to forgive me, since what ill I have done her was inevitable, while the good I did was voluntary. I must see her, Master Cargill—I must see her before I die. I shall never pray till I see her, I shall never profit by word of godliness till I see her! If I cannot obtain the pardon of a worm like myself, how can I hope for that of '——

She started at these words with a faint scream; for slowly, and with a feeble hand, the curtains of the bed opposite to the side at which Cargill sat were opened, and the figure of Clara Mowbray, her clothes and long hair drenched and dripping with rain, stood in the opening by the bedside. The dying woman sat upright, her eyes starting from their sockets, her lips quivering, her face pale, her emaciated hands grasping the bed-clothes, as if to support herself, and looking as much aghast as if her

confession had called up the apparition of her betrayed friend.

'Hannah Irwin,' said Clara, with her usual sweetness of tone, 'my early friend—my unprovoked enemy! Betake thee to Him who hath pardon for us all, and betake thee with confidence; for I pardon you as freely as if you had never wronged me, as freely as I desire my own pardon. Farewell—Farewell!'

She retired from the room, ere the clergyman could convince himself that it was more than a phantom which he beheld. He ran downstairs, he summoned assistants, but no one could attend his call; for the deep ruckling groans of the patient satisfied every one that she was breathing her last; and Mrs. Dods, with the maid-servant, ran into the bedroom, to witness the death of Hannah Irwin, which shortly after took place.

That event had scarcely occurred when the maid-servant, who had been left in the inn, came down in great terror to acquaint her mistress that a lady had entered the house like a ghost, and was dying in Mr. Tyrrel's room. The truth of the story we must tell our own way.

In the irregular state of Miss Mowbray's mind, a less violent impulse than that which she had received from her brother's arbitrary violence, added to the fatigues, dangers, and terrors of her night-walk, might have exhausted the powers of her body, and alienated those of her mind. We have before said, that the lights in the clergyman's house had probably attracted her attention, and, in the temporary confusion of a family never remarkable for its regularity, she easily mounted the stairs, and entered the sick chamber undiscovered, and thus overheard Hannah Irwin's confession, a tale sufficient to have greatly aggravated her mental malady.

We have no means of knowing whether she actually sought Tyrrel, or whether it was, as in the former case, the circumstance of a light still burning where all around was dark, that attracted her; but her next apparition was close by the side of her unfortunate lover, then deeply engaged in writing, when something suddenly gleamed on a large, old-fashioned mirror, which hung on the wall opposite. He looked up, and saw the figure of Clara,

holding a light (which she had taken from the passage) in her extended hand. He stood for an instant with his eyes fixed on this fearful shadow, ere he dared to turn round on the substance which was thus reflected. When he did so, the fixed and pallid countenance almost impressed him with the belief that he saw a vision, and he shuddered when, stooping beside him, she took his hand. 'Come away!' she said, in a hurried voice, 'Come away, my brother follows to kill us both. Come, Tyrrel, let us fly—we shall easily escape him. Hannah Irwin is on before—but, if we are overtaken, I will have no more fighting—you must promise me that we shall not; we have had but too much of that, but you will be wise in future.'

'Clara Mowbray!' exclaimed Tyrrel. 'Alas! is it thus? Stay, do not go,' for she turned to make her escape, 'stay—stay—sit down.'

'I must go,' she replied, 'I must go—I am called; Hannah Irwin is gone before to tell all, and I must follow. Will you not let me go? Nay, if you will hold me by force, I know I must sit down. But you will not be able to keep me for all that.'

A convulsion fit followed, and seemed, by its violence, to explain that she was indeed bound for the last and darksome journey. The maid, who at length answered Tyrrel's earnest and repeated summons, fled terrified at the scene she witnessed, and carried to the manse the alarm which we before mentioned.

The old landlady was compelled to exchange one scene of sorrow for another, wondering within herself what fatality could have marked this single night with so much misery. When she arrived at home, what was her astonishment to find there the daughter of the house which, even in their alienation, she had never ceased to love, in a state little short of distraction, and tended by Tyrrel, whose state of mind seemed scarce more composed than that of the unhappy patient. The oddities of Mrs. Dods were merely the rust which had accumulated upon her character, but without impairing its native strength and energy; and her sympathies were not of a kind acute enough to disable her from thinking and acting as decisively as circumstances required.

'Maister Tyrrel,' she said, 'this is nae sight for men folk—ye maun rise and gang to another room.

'I will not stir from her,' said Tyrrel; 'I will not remove from her either now, or as long as she or I may live.

'That will be nae lang space, Maister Tyrrel, if ye wunna be ruled by common sense.'

Tyrrel started up, as if half comprehending what she said, but remained motionless.

'Come, come,' said the compassionate landlady; 'do not stand looking on a sight sair eneugh to break a harder heart than yours, hinny—your ain sense tells ye, ye canna stay here. Miss Clara shall be weel cared for, and I'll bring word to your room-door frae half-hour to half-hour how she is.'

The necessity of the case was undeniable, and Tyrrel suffered himself to be led to another apartment, leaving Miss Mowbray to the care of the hostess and her female assistants. He counted the hours in an agony, less by the watch than by the visits which Mrs. Dods, faithful to her promise, made from interval to interval, to tell him that Clara was not better—that she was worse—and, at last, that she did not think she could live over morning. It required all the deprecatory influence of the good landlady to restrain Tyrrel, who, calm and cold on common occasions, was proportionally fierce and impetuous when his passions were afloat, from bursting into the room, and ascertaining, with his own eyes, the state of the beloved patient. At length there was a long interval—an interval of hours—so long, indeed, that Tyrrel caught from it the flattering hope that Clara slept, and that sleep might bring refreshment both to mind and body. Mrs. Dods, he concluded, was prevented from moving, for fear of disturbing her patient's slumber; and, as if actuated by the same feeling which he imputed to her, he ceased to traverse his apartment, as his agitation had hitherto dictated, and throwing himself into a chair, forbore to move even a finger, and withheld his respiration as much as possible, just as if he had been seated by the pillow of the patient. Morning was far advanced, when his landlady appeared in his room with a grave and anxious countenance.

'Mr. Tyrrel,' she said, 'ye are a Christian man.'

'Hush, hush, for Heaven's sake!' he replied; 'you will disturb Miss Mowbray.'

'Naething will disturb her, puir thing,' answered Mrs. Dods; 'they have muckle to answer for that brought her to this.'

'They have—they have indeed,' said Tyrrel, striking his forehead; 'and I will see her avenged on every one of them! Can I see her?'

'Better not—better not,' said the good woman; but he burst from her, and rushed into the apartment.

'Is life gone? Is every spark extinct?' he exclaimed eagerly to a country surgeon, a sensible man, who had been summoned from Marchthorn in the course of the night. The medical man shook his head. Tyrrel rushed to the bedside, and was convinced by his own eyes that the being whose sorrows he had both caused and shared, was now insensible to all earthly calamity. He raised almost a shriek of despair, as he threw himself on the pale hand of the corpse, wet it with tears, devoured it with kisses, and played for a short time the part of a distracted person. At length, on the repeated expostulation of all present, he suffered himself to be again conducted to another apartment, the surgeon following, anxious to give such sad consolation as the case admitted of.

'As you are so deeply concerned for the untimely fate of this young lady,' he said, 'it may be some satisfaction to you, though a melancholy one, to know that it has been occasioned by a pressure on the brain, probably accompanied by a suffusion; and I feel authorized in stating, from the symptoms, that if life had been spared, reason would, in all probability, never have returned. In such a case, sir, the most affectionate relation must own that death, in comparison to life, is a mercy.'

'Mercy!' answered Tyrrel; 'but why, then, is it denied to me? I know—I know! My life is spared till I revenge her.'

He started from his seat, and hurried eagerly downstairs. But, as he was about to rush from the door of the inn, he was stopped by Touchwood, who had just alighted from a carriage, with an air of stern anxiety imprinted on his features, very different from their usual expression.

'Whither would ye? Whither would ye?' he said, laying hold of Tyrrel, and stopping him by force.

'For revenge—for revenge!' said Tyrrel. 'Give way, I charge you, on your peril!'

DEATH OF CLARA MOWBRAY

'Vengeance belongs to God,' replied the old man, 'and His bolt has fallen. This way—this way,' he continued, dragging Tyrrel into the house. 'Know,' he said, so soon as he had led or forced him into a chamber, 'that Mowbray of Saint Ronan's has met Bulmer within this half-hour, and has killed him on the spot.'

'Killed ?—whom ?' answered the bewildered Tyrrel.

'Valentine Bulmer, the titular Earl of Etherington.'

'You bring tidings of death to the house of death,' answered Tyrrel; 'and there is nothing in this world left that I should live for.'

CHAPTER XXXIX

CONCLUSION

Here come we to our close—for that which follows
Is but the tale of dull, unvaried misery.
Steep crags and headlong linns may court the pencil,
Like sudden haps, dark plots, and strange adventures;
But who would paint the dull and fog-wrapt moor,
In its long track of sterile desolation ?—*Old Play.*

When Mowbray crossed the brook, as we have already detailed, his mind was in that wayward and uncertain state which seeks something whereon to vent the self-engendered rage with which it labours, like a volcano before eruption. On a sudden, a shot or two, followed by loud voices and laughter, reminded him he had promised, at that hour, and in that sequestered place, to decide a bet respecting pistol-shooting, to which the titular Lord Etherington, Jekyl, and Captain MacTurk, to whom such a pastime was peculiarly congenial, were parties as well as himself. The prospect this recollection afforded him, of vengeance on the man whom he regarded as the author of his sister's wrongs, was, in the present state of his mind, too tempting to be relinquished; and, setting spurs to his horse, he rushed through the copse to the little glade, where he found the other parties, who, despairing of his arrival, had already begun their amusement. A jubilee shout was set up as he approached.

'Here comes Mowbray, dripping, by Cot, like a watering-pan,' said Captain MacTurk.

'I fear him not,' said Etherington (we may as well still call him so); 'he has ridden too fast to have steady nerves.'

'We shall soon see that, my Lord Etherington, or rather Mr. Valentine Bulmer,' said Mowbray, springing from his horse, and throwing the bridle over a bough of the tree.

'What does this mean, Mr. Mowbray ?' said Ethering-

ton, drawing himself up, while Jekyl and Captain MacTurk looked at each other in surprise.

'It means, sir, that you are a rascal and an impostor,' replied Mowbray, 'who have assumed a name to which you have no right.'

'That, Mr. Mowbray, is an insult I cannot carry farther than this spot,' said Etherington.

'If you had been willing to do so, you should have carried with it something still harder to be borne,' answered Mowbray.

'Enough, enough, my good sir; no use in spurring a willing horse. Jekyl, you will have the kindness to stand by me in this matter?'

'Certainly, my lord,' said Jekyl.

'And, as there seems to be no chance of taking up the matter amicably,' said the pacific Captain MacTurk, 'I will be most happy, so help me, to assist my worthy friend, Mr. Mowbray of Saint Ronan's, with my countenance and advice. Very goot chance that we were here with the necessary weapons, since it would have been an unpleasant thing to have such an affair long upon the stomach, any more than to settle it without witnesses.'

'I would fain know first,' said Jekyl, 'what all this sudden heat has arisen about.'

'About nothing,' said Etherington, 'except a mare's nest of Mr. Mowbray's discovering. He always knew his sister played the madwoman, and he has now heard a report, I suppose, that she has likewise in her time played the——fool.'

'Oh, crimini!' cried Captain MacTurk, 'my good captain, let us pe loading and measuring out—for, by my soul, if these sweetmeats be passing between them, it is only the twa ends of a hankercher that can serve the turn. Cot tamn!'

With such friendly intentions, the ground was hastily meted out. Each was well known as an excellent shot; and the captain offered a bet to Jekyl of a mutchkin of Glenlivat, that both would fall by the first fire. The event showed that he was nearly right; for the ball of Lord Etherington grazed Mowbray's temple, at the very second of time that Mowbray's pierced his heart. He sprang a yard from the ground, and fell down a dead man. Mow-

bray stood fixed like a pillar of stone, his arm dropped to his side, his hand still clenched on the weapon of death, reeking at the touch-hole and muzzle. Jekyl ran to raise and support his friend, and Captain MacTurk, having adjusted his spectacles, stooped on one knee to look him in the face. 'We should have had Dr. Quackleben here,' he said, wiping his glasses, and returning them to the shagreen case, 'though it would have been only for form's sake, for he is as dead as a toor-nail, poor boy. But come, Mowbray, my bairn,' he said, taking him by the arm, 'we must be ganging our ain gate, you and me, before waur comes of it. I have a bit pony here, and you have your horse till we get to Marchthorn. Captain Jekyl, I wish you a good morning. Will you have my umbrella back to the inn, for I surmeese it is going to rain ?'

Mowbray had not ridden a hundred yards with his guide and companion, when he drew his bridle, and refused to proceed a step further till he had learned what had become of Clara. The captain began to find he had a very untractable pupil to manage, when, while they were arguing together, Touchwood drove past in his hack chaise. As soon as he recognized Mowbray, he stopped the carriage to inform him that his sister was at the Aultoun, which he had learned from finding there had been a messenger sent from thence to the Well for medical assistance, which could not be afforded, the Esculapius of the place, Dr. Quackleben, having been privately married to Mrs. Blower on that morning, by Mr. Chatterly, and having set out on the usual nuptial tour.

In return for this intelligence, Captain MacTurk communicated the fate of Lord Etherington. The old man earnestly pressed instant flight, for which he supplied at the same time ample means, engaging to furnish every kind of assistance and support to the unfortunate young lady; and representing to Mowbray that if he stayed in the vicinity, a prison would soon separate them. Mowbray and his companion then departed southward upon the spur, reached London in safety, and from thence went together to the Peninsula, where the war was then at the hottest.

There remains little more to be told. Mr. Touchwood is still alive, forming plans which have no object, and

accumulating a fortune, for which he has apparently no heir. The old man had endeavoured to fix this character, as well as his general patronage, upon Tyrrel, but the attempt only determined the latter to leave the country; nor has he been since heard of, although the title and estates of Etherington lie vacant for his acceptance. It is the opinion of many that he has entered into a Moravian mission, for the use of which he had previously drawn considerable sums.

Since Tyrrel's departure, no one pretends to guess what old Touchwood will do with his money. He often talks of his disappointments, but can never be made to understand, or at least to admit, that they were in some measure precipitated by his own talent for intrigue and manœuvring. Most people think that Mowbray of Saint Ronan's will be at last his heir. That gentleman has of late shown one quality which usually recommends men to the favour of rich relations, namely, a close and cautious care of what is already his own. Captain MacTurk's military ardour having revived when they came within smell of gunpowder, the old soldier contrived not only to get himself on full pay, but to induce his companion to serve for some time as a volunteer. He afterwards obtained a commission, and nothing could be more strikingly different than was the conduct of the young Laird of Saint Ronan's and of Lieutenant Mowbray. The former, as we know, was gay, venturous, and prodigal; the latter lived on his pay, and even within it—denied himself comforts, and often decencies, when doing so could save a guinea; and turned pale with apprehension, if, on any extraordinary occasion, he ventured sixpence a corner at whist. This meanness, or closeness of disposition, prevents his holding the high character to which his bravery and attention to his regimental duties might otherwise entitle him. The same close and accurate calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence, marked his communications with his agent Meiklewham, who might otherwise have had better pickings out of the estate of Saint Ronan's, which is now at nurse, and thriving full fast; especially since some debts, of rather an usurious character, have been paid up by Mr. Touchwood, who contented himself with more moderate usage.

On the subject of this property, Mr. Mowbray, generally speaking, gave such minute directions for acquiring and saving, that his old acquaintance, Mr. Winterblossom, tapping his morocco snuff-box with the sly look which intimated the coming of a good thing, was wont to say, that he had reversed the usual order of transformation, and was turned into a grub after having been a butterfly. After all, this narrowness, though a more ordinary modification of the spirit of avarice, may be founded on the same desire of acquisition, which in his earlier days sent him to the gaming-table.

But there was one remarkable instance in which Mr. Mowbray departed from the rules of economy, by which he was guided in all others. Having acquired, for a large sum of money, the ground which he had formerly feued out for the erection of the hotel, lodging-houses, shops, &c., at Saint Ronan's Well, he sent positive orders for the demolition of the whole, nor would he permit the existence of any house of entertainment on his estate, except that in the Aultoun, where Mrs. Dods reigns with undisputed sway, her temper by no means improved either by time, or her arbitrary disposition by the total absence of competition.

Why Mr. Mowbray, with his acquired habits of frugality, thus destroyed a property which might have produced a considerable income, no one could pretend to affirm. Some said that he remembered his own early follies, and others that he connected the buildings with the misfortunes of his sister. The vulgar reported that Lord Etherington's ghost had been seen in the ball-room, and the learned talked of the association of ideas. But it all ended in this, that Mr. Mowbray was independent enough to please himself, and that such was Mr. Mowbray's pleasure.

The little watering-place has returned to its primitive obscurity; and lions and lionesses, with their several jackals, blue surtouts, and bluer stockings, fiddlers and dancers, painters and amateurs, authors and critics, dispersed like pigeons by the demolition of a dovecot, have sought other scenes of amusement and rehearsal, and have deserted SAINT RONAN'S WELL.[n]

NOTES

Note 1.—Inn Charges, p. 9.

This was universally the case in Scotland forty or fifty years ago; and so little was charged for a domestic's living when the author became first acquainted with the road, that a shilling or eighteenpence was sufficient board wages for a manservant when a crown would not now answer the purpose. It is true the cause of these reasonable charges rested upon a principle equally unjust to the landlord and inconvenient to the guest. The landlord did not expect to make anything upon the charge for eating which his bill contained; in consideration of which, the guest was expected to drink more wine than might be convenient or agreeable to him, '*for the good*', as it was called, '*of the house.*' The landlord indeed was willing and ready to assist, in this duty, every stranger who came within his gates. Other things were in proportion. A charge for lodging, fire, and candle, was long a thing unheard of in Scotland. A shilling to the housemaid settled all such considerations. I see, from memorandums of 1790, that a young man, with two ponies and a serving-lad, might travel from the house of one Meg Dods to another, through most part of Scotland, for about five or six shillings a day.

Note 2.—Scotch Tenants, p. 10.

In Scotland, a village is erected upon a species of landright, very different from the copyhold so frequent in England. Every alienation or sale of landed property must be made in the shape of a feudal conveyance, and the party who acquires it holds thereby an absolute and perfect right of property in the fief, while he discharges the stipulations of the vassal, and, above all, pays the feu-duties. The vassal or tenant of the site of the smallest cottage holds his possession as absolutely as the proprietor, of whose large estate it is perhaps scarce a perceptible portion. By dint of excellent laws, the sasines, or deeds of delivery of such fiefs, are placed in record in such order, that every burden affecting the property can be seen for payment of a very moderate fee; so that a person proposing to lend money upon it, knows exactly the nature and extent of his security.

From the nature of these landrights being so explicit and secure, the Scottish people have been led to entertain a jealousy of building-leases, of however long duration. Not long ago, a great landed proprietor took the latter mode of disposing of some ground near a thriving town in the west country. The number of years in the lease was settled at nine hundred and ninety-nine. All was agreed to, and the deeds were ordered to be drawn. But the tenant, as he walked down the avenue, began to reflect that the lease, though so very long as to be almost perpetual, nevertheless had a termination; and that after the lapse of a thousand years, lacking one, the connexion of his family and representatives with the estate would cease. He took a qualm at the thought of the loss to be sustained by his posterity a thousand years hence; and going back to the house of the gentleman who feued the ground, he demanded, and readily obtained, the additional term of fifty years to be added to the lease.

Note 3.—The Dark Ladye, p. 16.

The Dark Ladye is one of those tantalizing fragments in which Mr. Coleridge has shown us what exquisite powers of poetry he has suffered to remain uncultivated. Let us be thankful for what we have received, however. The unfashioned ore, drawn from so rich a mine, is worth all to which art can add its highest decorations, when drawn from less abundant sources. The verses beginning the poem, which are published separately, are said to have soothed the last hours of Mr. Fox. They are the stanzas entitled Love.

Note 4.—A Kettle of Fish, p. 138.

A kettle of fish is a *fête-champêtre* of a particular kind, which is to other *fête-champêtres* what the piscatory eclogues of Brown or Sannazario are to pastoral poetry. A large cauldron is boiled by the side of a salmon river, containing a quantity of water, thickened with salt to the consistence of brine. In this the fish is plunged when taken, and eaten by the company *fronde super viridi*. This is accounted the best way of eating salmon by those who desire to taste the fish in a state of extreme freshness. Others prefer it after being kept a day or two, when the curd melts into oil, and the fish becomes richer and more luscious. The more judicious gastronomes eat no other sauce than a spoonful of the water in which the salmon is boiled, together with a little pepper and vinegar.

Note 5.—Mago-Pico, p. 186.

This satire, very popular even in Scotland, at least with one party, was composed at the expense of a reverend Presbyterian divine, of whom many stories are preserved, being Mr. Pyet, the Mago-Pico of the tale, minister of Dunbar. The work is now little known in Scotland, and not at all in England, though written with much strong and coarse humour, resembling the style of Arbuthnot. It was composed by Mr. Haliburton, a military chaplain. The distresses attending Mago-Pico's bachelor life are thus stated :—

'At the same time I desire you would only figure out to yourself his situation during his celibacy in the ministerial charge—a house lying all heaps upon heaps; his bed ill-made, swarming with fleas, and very cold on the winter nights; his sheep's-head not to be eaten for wool and hair, his broth singed, his bread mouldy, his lamb and pig all scouthered, his house neither washed nor plastered; his black stockings darned with white worsted above the shoes; his butter made into cat's harns; his cheese one heap of mites and maggots, and full of large avenues for rats and mice to play at hide-and-seek and make their nests in. Frequent were the admonitions he had given his maidservants on this score, and every now and then he was turning them off; but still the last was the worst, and in the meanwhile the poor man was the sufferer. At any rate, therefore, matrimony must turn to his account, though his wife should prove to be nothing but a creature of the feminine gender, with a tongue in her head, and ten fingers on her hands, to clear out the papers of the housemaid, not to mention the convenience of a man's having it in his power lawfully to beget sons and daughters in his own house.'—*Memoirs of Mago-Pico.* Second Edition. Edinburgh, 1761, p. 19.

Note 6.—Canine Dexterity, p. 376.

There were several instances of this dexterity, but especially those which occurred in the celebrated case of Murdison and Millar in 1773. These persons, a sheep-farmer and his shepherd, settled in the vale of Tweed, commenced and carried on for some time an extensive system of devastation on the flocks

of their neighbours. A dog belonging to Millar was so well trained, that he had only to show him during the day the parcel of sheep which he desired to have; and when dismissed at night for the purpose, Yarrow went right to the pasture where the flock had fed, and carried off the quantity shown to him. He then drove them before him by the most secret paths to Murdison's farm, where the dishonest master and servant were in readiness to receive the booty. Two things were remarkable. In the first place, that if the dog, when thus dishonestly employed, actually met his master, he observed great caution in recognizing him, as if he had been afraid of bringing him under suspicion; secondly, that he showed a distinct sense that the illegal transactions in which he was engaged were not of a nature to endure daylight. The sheep which he was directed to drive were often reluctant to leave their own pastures, and sometimes the intervention of rivers and other obstacles made their progress peculiarly difficult. On such occasions, Yarrow continued his efforts to drive his plunder forward until the day began to dawn, a signal which, he conceived, rendered it necessary for him to desert his spoil, and slink homeward by a circuitous road. It is generally said this accomplished dog was hanged along with his master; but the truth is, he survived him long, in the service of a man in Leithen, yet was said afterwards to have shown little of the wonderful instinct exhibited in the service of Millar.

Another instance of similar sagacity a friend of mine discovered in a beautiful little spaniel which he had purchased from a dealer in the canine race. When he entered a shop, he was not long in observing that his little companion made it a rule to follow at some interval, and to estrange itself from his master so much as to appear totally unconnected with him. And when he left the shop, it was the dog's custom to remain behind him till it could find opportunity of seizing a pair of gloves, or silk stockings, or some similar property, which it brought to its master. The poor fellow probably saved its life by falling into the hands of an honest man.

Note 7.—Parochial Charity, p. 384.

The author has made an attempt in this character to draw a picture of what is too often seen, a wretched being whose heart becomes hardened and spited at the world, in which she is doomed to experience much misery and little sympathy. The system of compulsory charity by poor's rates, of which the absolute necessity can hardly be questioned, has connected with it on both sides some of the most odious and malevolent feelings that can agitate humanity. The quality of true charity is not strained. Like that of mercy, of which, in a large sense, it may be accounted a sister virtue, it blesses him that gives and him that takes. It awakens kindly feelings both in the mind of the donor and in that of the relieved object. The giver and receiver are recommended to each other by mutual feelings of goodwill, and the pleasurable emotions connected with the consciousness of a good action fix the deed in recollection of the one, while a sense of gratitude renders it holy to the other. In the legal and compulsory assessment for the proclaimed parish pauper, there is nothing of all this. The alms are extorted from an unwilling hand, and a heart which desires the annihilation, rather than the relief, of the distressed object. The object of charity, sensible of the ill-will with which the pittance is bestowed, seizes on it as his right, not as a favour. The manner of conferring it being directly calculated to hurt and disgust his feelings, he revenges himself by becoming impudent and clamorous. A more odious picture, or more likely to deprave the feelings of those exposed to its influence, can hardly be imagined; and yet to such a point have we been brought by an artificial system of society, that we must either deny altogether the right of the poor to their just proportion of the fruits of the earth, or afford them some means of subsistence out of them by the institution of positive law.

NOTE 8.—MRS. DODS, p. 460.

Non omnis moriar. Saint Ronan's, since this veracious history was given to the public, has revived as a sort of alias, or second title, to the very pleasant village of Inverleithen upon Tweed, where there is a medicinal spring much frequented by visitors. Prizes for some of the manly and athletic sports common in the pastoral district around are competed for under the title of the Saint Ronan's Games. Nay, Meg Dods has produced herself of late from obscurity as authoress of a work on Cookery, of which, in justice to a lady who makes so distinguished a figure as this excellent dame, we insert the title-page :—

'The Cook and Housewife's Manual : A practical System of Modern Domestic Cookery and Family Management.

——— Cook, see all your sawces
Be sharp and poynant in the palate, that they may
Commend you : look to your roast and baked meats handsomely,
And what new kickshaws and delicate made things.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

By Mistress Margaret Dods, of the Cleikum Inn, Saint Ronan's.'

Though it is rather unconnected with our immediate subject, we cannot help adding, that Mrs. Dods has preserved the recipes of certain excellent old dishes which we would be loath should fall into oblivion in our day ; and in bearing this testimony, we protest that we are no way biassed by the receipt of two bottles of excellent sauce for cold meat, which were sent to us by the said Mrs. Dods as a mark of her respect and regard, for which we return her our unfeigned thanks, having found them capital.

GLOSSARY

Abigail, lady's-maid.
Abramman, begging lunatic.
absolvitur, acquittal.
abstersion, cleansing.
advowson, right of presentation to a benefice.
affiche, advertisement.
agio, rate of exchange in money-changing.
ajee, awry.
allegro, movement in brisk time.
amoureux de seize ans, lover aged sixteen years.
Amphitryon où l'on dine, giver of the feast.
Andrea Ferrara, sword.
Anglicé, in English.
antenup', antenuptial cohabitation.
argent comptant, ready money.
Ars Topiaria, art of landscape gardening.
Ascanius, son of Aeneas.
asper, small Turkish coin.
assoilzie, acquit.
aucht, eight; possession.
Aultoun, Old Town.
averment, positive statement.
awmry, cupboard.

back-hand, the left-hand court at tennis.
ballant, ballad.
bal paré, fancy-dress ball.
banded, under a bond or mortgage.
bannock, home-made loaf.
baron-bailie, magistrate.
basilisk, fabulous reptile, supposed to kill by its look.
basket-beagle, beagle that chased a hare slipped from a basket.
bavardage, small talk.
bawbee, half-penny.
beau garçon, dandy.
beau monde, fashionable world.
bedral, sexton.
Begum, Indian lady of high rank.
Beltane, May-day, Whitsuntide.
bent, take the, flee the country.
bicker, wooden vessel.
biding, awaiting.
biggit, built.
bilk, cheat.
bind, one's ability or power (to drink).
Bismallah, 'In God's name.'
bit, spot, place.
blade, jovial fellow.
blawart, blue-bottle.
blaw-in-my-lug, flatterer.
blink, glimpse.
blow, expose.
blunt, money.
boddle, copper coin, value $\frac{1}{6}d$.
bogle, bugbear, scarecrow.
bombazine, stuff used for lawyers' gowns.
bona fide, genuinely.
bonnet-laird, proprietor who farms his own land.
bon vivant, gourmand.
bonze, Buddhist priest.
bosky, bushy.
bourrasque, squall.
brandered, broiled.
brank-new, brand-new.
braw, brave, fine.
briquet, steel with which to strike a light.
bruick, kind of boil.
burn, brook.
busking, dressing.

by ordinar, by ordinary, beyond the ordinary.
cadi, judge.
callant, lad.
caller, fresh.
canny, trustworthy, quiet.
cantle, crown of the head.
cantrip, piece of mischief.
canty, lively, cheerful.
capernoity, irritable.
capillaire, syrup made from maidenhair fern.
capot, winning of all tricks by one player.
cappie, kind of beer.
caravanserai, inn.
carious molendinar, decayed tooth.
carle, fellow.
carline, witch.
carrack, large ship of burden.
carvey, carraway.
celebrare domestica facta, to celebrate domestic events.
cheek-haffit, side of the cheek.
chiffonerie, lady's fancy work-table.
chucky stanes, pebbles.
cimelia, treasures, plate, &c., belonging to a church.
clachan, hamlet.
claes-screen, clothes-horse.
claver, gossip.
clawed, beat.
clecked, hatched.
cleekit, cleiket, been taken by; caught.
cleikum, equivalent to 'catch 'em'.
clever, agile, neat, nice.
clink, rhyme.
cock-a-leeky, Scotch soup of cock boiled with leeks.
cock-bree, kind of broth.
cockernonie, top-knot.
cockle-brained, whimsical, eccentric.
cogue, wooden measure.
comme il faut, as it ought to be.
comptis, accounts.
concio ad clerum, address to the clergy.
condiddle, appropriate.
corbie, raven.
corpus delicti, all that goes to make a breach of law.
courie, cowrie, shell used as money in parts of Asia.
couscousou, a Moorish dish.
couteau de chasse, hunting-knife.
cowt, colt.
crackit, cracked.
crap, wig of rough short hair; crop.
craws, crows.
croupier, vice-chairman at public dinner.
cued, in a queue.
cuisine, cookery.
cuittle, wheedle.
Culdee, Scottish primitive Christian.
cull, fool.
curator bonis, guardian, trustee.
cut of one's jib, personal appearance.
cutty, jade.
Cybele, goddess to whom the lion was sacred.

daffing, frolicking.
decerniture, decree of the court.
declarator (action of), in Scotch Law, a form of action in the Court of Session, in which something is prayed to be declared judicially, the legal consequences being left to follow as a matter of course.
de futuro, for the future.
deil's buckie, devil's imp.
déjeûner à la fourchette, knife-and-fork breakfast, or lunch.
delecrit, distracted.
delict, misdemeanour.
demi-jour, half-light.
de par le monde, in society
diablerie, devilry.
doited, doting.
donnart, stupid.
dookit, ducked.
dooly, Indian litter.
dorts, sullen humour.

douce, well behaved.
dought, was able.
dowcot, dovecot.
drap, drop of.
dree, undergo.
drog, drug.
dub-skelper, idle vagabond.
dulces Amaryllidis irae, the anger of sweet Amaryllis.
dung, knocked.
dwam, stupor.

éclaircissement, explanation.
éclat, renown.
een, eyes.
encognure, corner table.
et hoc genus omne, and all that sort.
et pour cause, and with reason.
Euphrosyne, one of the Graces.
evict, recover by legal process.
ex intervallo, at intervals.
ex officio, officially.

faire les frais de la conversation, to sustain the burden of conversation.
fash, fashery, fash your thumb, trouble.
fashious, troublesome.
feck, part, greater part.
feckless, spiritless.
feir, with good countenance.
femme d'atours, lady's-maid.
femme savante, learned lady.
fend, defence.
festina lente, hasten slowly.
fête-champêtre, outdoor entertainment.
feu, lease, ground-rent.
feuar, leaseholder.
file, foul.
fille de chambre, chambermaid.
fleeching, flattering.
fleeing, flying.
flichtering, fluttering.
flisk-ma-hoy, silly flirt.
flush, startle.
flyte, scold.
forby, besides.
forget, forgetfulness.
fowler, poacher.
frappant, striking.
fronde super viridi, under the green trees.
frontless, unabashed.
funditis, thoroughly.
fushionless, tasteless.
galliard, sprightly.
galopin, scullion, errand-boy.
gang, go.
Ganymede, cup-bearer to the gods.
gar, make.
gastronome, judge of cookery.
gate, way.
gay, very.
gazé, veiled.
geisened, leaking.
gill-flirt, giddy flirt.
gin, if.
girn, grin.
glacis, bank sloping down from a fort.
gled, kite.
gnostic, knowing.
gomeril, ass, fool.
gowk, fool.
gowpen, double handful.
graymalkin, old she-cat.
gree, come to terms.
groat, silver coin, value 4*d*.
grossart, gooseberry.
grue, feel gruesome.
gusing-iron, smoothing-iron.

habeas corpus, writ requiring body of person to be brought into court.
Hadji, Mecca pilgrim.
ha'-house, manor-house.
hank, coil.
haugh, meadow.
havrel, foolish chatterer.
heathertap, tuft of heather.
hellicate, giddy, wild.
helve, handle.
hempie, rogue, tomboy.
heritor, land-owning parishioner.
het, hot.
hidalgo, Spanish gentleman.
hight, called.
hirple, hobble.
holm, flat ground by river.

honoraria, fees.
hooly, softly, slowly.
horse-couper, horse-dealer
hotch, jerk oneself along in a sitting posture.
houghs, thighs.
howff, *howf*, place of resort
howkit, dug.
hurley-hacket, badly-hung carriage.

ignis fatuus, will-o'-the-wisp.
ilk, *ilka*, each.
imaum, Mohammedan priest.
implement, fulfil.
in propria persona, in person.
instanter, at once.
in transitu, on the way out.
intra parietes, through the walls.
in votis, lit. in answer to his prayers, i.e. welcome.
irritancy, making or being null and void.
Isle of Saints, Ireland.

janizary, Turkish soldier.
jaud, jade.
jaug, saddle-bag.
jer-falcon, species of hawk.
jink, dodge.
jinketing, dancing.
jirbling, emptying liquids from vessel to vessel.
joseph, woman's long riding-coat.

kale, broth.
khan, inn.
kittle, be born; tickle.
knap, break.

lagged, sent to penal servitude.
lamer, amber.
lang syne, long since.
lave, rest.
lawing, tavern-reckoning.
lea-rig, unploughed land or hillside.
liaison, intrigue.
limmer, worthless creature.
lippen, trust.
locum tenens, one holding office temporarily.
loose, claim and so release.
loosing-time, leaving-off time.
loup, leap.
luckie, housewife.
lug, ear.
lugger, small ship with four-cornered sails set fore and aft.

Machaon, surgeon to the Greeks in the Trojan war.
magnum, two-quart bottle.
mailing, farm.
maravedi, old Spanish coin, value $\frac{1}{15}d.$
march, boundary.
mask, infuse, brew.
maun, must.
mauvaise honte, bashfulness.
mawkin, hare.
meikle, much.
meith, mark.
mell, meddle.
menstruum, solvent.
messuage, dwelling-house with outbuildings and land assigned to its use.
molendinar, molar tooth.
mon âne parle, &c. (p. 73), My ass speaks, and he even speaks well.
monsieur le frère, the brother.
more Scotico, in Scotch fashion.
muckle, great, much.
multiplepoinding, action on double distress, bill of interpleading.
multure, miller's fee for grinding grain.
mundungus, bad-smelling tobacco.
munt, mount.
murgeon-maker, maker of grimaces, mountebank.
mutch, woman's cap.
mutchkin, pint.

naïf, artless.
neist, next.
n'importe, no matter.
non omnis moriar, I shall not wholly die.
nuance, tint.

nunquam non paratus, never unprepared.

odd-come-shortly, chance time not far off.
oedematous, dropsical.
optat aprum, &c. (p. 43), He wishes a wild boar or a tawny lion would come down from the hill.
over-head, every one of them.

pabouch, slipper.
paddock, familiar spirit in the shape of a toad.
palinode, in Scotch libel cases a formal recantation exacted in addition to damages.
palladium, safeguard.
paullo post futurum, tense expressing state resulting from future act, future-perfect; (*facet.*) immediate future.
paupharmacon, universal care.
pawky, shrewd, droll.
pendante, companion.
per diem, a day.
pharmacopoeia, stock of drugs.
pickle, small quantity of.
pinfold, pound for stray cattle.
placebo, medicine intended rather to pacify than to benefit medicinally.
plack, copper coin, value $\frac{1}{3}d$.
plisky, trick.
pluvious, rainy.
pock, bag.
pococurante, indifferent person.
podagra, gout in the foot.
pomander, perfume.
pony, twenty-five pounds sterling.
poortith, poverty.
porteur, bearer.
pother, chatter.
pow, head.
précieuse, superior person (fem.).
prescription, claim founded on long use.
Prieves, proof, legal probation.
procès-verbal, official report, minutes.
Procurator-fiscal, law-officer.
prononcés, strongly marked.
pseudo-bijouterie, would-be ornaments.
puerperal, due to childbirth.
puir, poor.
pyot, magpie.

quaere aliud hospitium, seek some other inn.
quaigh, small and shallow drinking-cup with two ears.
quantum sufficit, sufficient quantity.
quean, impudent girl, hussy.
quis novus hic hospes? what new guest is this?
quiz, person who ridicules or burlesques another.

raff, worthless fellow, nobody.
Ragion, commercial or trading company.
rattan, walking-stick.
raxed, stretched.
redd up, tidy, put straight.
reekie, smoky.
regale, choice repast.
regis ad exemplar, following the king's example.
reise-sac, travelling-bag.
relict, widow.
remora, obstruction, impediment.
remotis testibus, apart from witnesses.
rencontre, meeting.
rerum dominos gentemque togatam, all citizens ought to know about legal business.
residuum, substance left after burning.
retenue, reserve.
retiring, withdrawing from currency.
rin, run.
rouleau, roll of gold coins.
ruse de guerre, stratagem of war.

Salam Alicum, Mohammedan greeting: 'Peace be with you.'
salutiferous, health-promoting.
sanctum sanctorum, lit. 'holy of holies,' private place.

santon, Mohammedan monk or hermit.
sasine, legal investiture.
savoir faire, address, tact.
scart, scratch.
scauff and raff, tag-rag and bobtail.
scaur, be frightened.
sclate, slate.
scrog, stunted bush or shrub.
secundum artem, scientifically.
sedet post equitem atra cura, black Care sits behind the horseman.
sejour, place of abode.
sgherro insigne, notorious cut-throat.
shool, shovel.
shouther, shoulder.
sib, kin, related.
sine qua non, indispensable condition.
sin syne, since.
skate-rumple, poor awkward-looking person.
skeel, skill.
skeely, skilful.
skink, kind of broth.
slaister, mess.
sloan, rebuff.
smoor, smother.
snap, small biscuit.
sneck, latch.
sneck-drawing, crafty.
soop, sweep.
sorn, sponge, live upon.
sort, manage.
sorting, scolding.
Sosia, a man constantly mistaken for another by reason of close resemblance.
sossings and soupings, made-up soups and messes.
soubrette, waiting-maid.
sough, calm.
souvenir, lady's reticule or hand-bag.
speer, ask.
spoon, simpleton.
stance, plot of ground.
steered, moved.
stoup, drinking-vessel.
strapped, hanged.
strathspey, Scotch dance resembling the reel, but slower.
streekit, stretched out (as being dead).
stressed for, in great need of.
Stygian Creek, the river Styx was the boundary on this side of hell, across which the souls of the dead had to pass.
style, marker.
supper up, serve for supper to.
synding, rinsing.
syne, since.
swarf, swoon.

tailzie, bond of entail.
tapis, on the, on the carpet, in hand.
tappit-hen, measure of claret equal to three magnums or six quarts.
tawpie, awkward girl, tomboy.
tête exaltée, little queer in the head.
thraw, thwart, oppose.
threepit, persisted.
tinklers, tinkers.
ton, mode, fashion.
tontine, annuity shared by subscribers to loan, the shares increasing as subscribers die till last subscriber gets all.
topping, fine, first-class.
tourbillon, whirlwind.
tout court, without addition.
tractus temporis in gremio, a deed of temporary contract.
trankum, flimsy ornament.
troking, doing business with.
trow, know.
tryacle, treacle.
tu me lo pagherai, I will pay you out for it.
turbinacious, peaty, turfy.
twopenny, kind of beer.

ultroneous, uncalled-for, unsolicited.
umquhile, late.
un bon diable, a good sort of fellow.
unco, uncommon, very.
urbs in rure, town in country.
usquebaugh, whisky.

velitation, skirmish, controversy.
venta, inn.
vertu, fine art.
viis et modis, by ways and means.
vilipend, disparage.
vita incerta, mors certissima, life is uncertain, death is most sure.
voila ce que c'est, &c. (p. 302), see what it is to have talents.

wae, woeful.
wame-fu', bellyful.
wan, won, got.
waur, worse ; *waur o't*, worse for it.
weird, destiny, fate.
wheen, few.
whilk, which.
whully-whaing, flattery.
windlestrae, small bundle of straw.
won, win, earn.
wud, mad.
wull, will.

yanking, smart, active.
ycleped, called.
yince, once.
yont, farther.

CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE

FIRST SERIES

THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTER

THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTER

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO AND MELBOURNE
1912

CONTENTS

PAGE

List of Illustrations vi

List of Characters vi

Introduction viii

Appendix to Introduction . . . ix

CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE

Mr. Croftangry's Preface . . . xiii

The Surgeon's Daughter 1

Mr. Croftangry's Conclusion . . . 165

Glossary 169

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Zilia de Monçada discovered by her Father	*Frontispiece*
The old Women of Middlemas at Dr. Gray's Door	5
The old East India House, Leadenhall Street, 1648	57
Haidar Alí	80
Menie Gray	127
Tipú Sultán, and his Signature as usually appended to State Papers	138

LIST OF CHARACTERS

MR. CROFTANGRY'S PREFACE AND CONCLUSION

Croftangry, Chrystal, a Scottish gentleman.
Fairscribe, Mr., a solicitor.
Fairscribe, Mr. James, his son.

Fairscribe, Miss Catherine (Katie), his daughter.
MacEvoy, Janet, an Edinburgh landlady.

THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTER

Barak el Hadji, an Indian fakir.
Butler, Mr., a military chaplain.
Capstern, Mr., captain of an Indiaman.
Esdale, Mr., a military surgeon.
Goodriche, Mr., a Catholic priest.
Gray, Gideon, surgeon, of Middlemas.

HAIDAR ALÍ, Nawab of Mysore.
HALI BEN KHALEDOUN, SCHEIK, a supposed fakir.
HARTLEY, ADAM, apprentice to Dr. Gray.
HILLARY, TOM, an attorney's apprentice, afterwards captain in the East India Company's service.
LAWFORD, MR., town-clerk of Middlemas.
M'FITTOCH, MR., a dancing-master.
MERCER, MAJOR, of the East India Company's service.
MIDDLEMAS, RICHARD, *alias* Tresham, *alias* Sadoc, son of Zilia de Monçada.
MONÇADA, MATTHIAS DE, a Portuguese Jewish merchant.
PAUPIAH, a Brahmin, steward to the President of the Council.
SADHU SING, an Indian ex-soldier.
SEELENCOOPER, CAPTAIN, governor of a military hospital.
TIPÚ SULTÁN, son of Haidar Alí.
TRESHAM, RICHARD, *alias* Matthew Middlemas, *alias* General Witherington.
WINTER, an old man-servant of General Witherington.

GRAY, MENIE (MARION), the surgeon's daughter.
GRAY, MRS. (*née* Jean Watson), her mother.
JAMIESON, BET, nurse in Dr. Gray's household.
JAUP, ALISON, an old woman.
MONÇADA, ZILIA DE, daughter of Matthias de Monçada.
MONTREVILLE, ADELA DE, *alias* the Begum Mootee Mahul.
SIMSON, JEAN, an old woman.
THOMSON ('TAMSON'), PEG, an old woman.

INTRODUCTION

THE tale of the *Surgeon's Daughter* formed part of the first series of Chronicles of the Canongate, published in 1827; but has been separated from the stories of *The Highland Widow*, &c., which it originally accompanied, and deferred to the close of this collection, for reasons which printers and publishers will understand, and which would hardly interest the general reader.

The Author has nothing to say now in reference to this little novel, but that the principal incident on which it turns was narrated to him one morning at breakfast by his worthy friend, Mr. Train, of Castle Douglas, in Galloway, whose kind assistance he has so often had occasion to acknowledge in the course of these prefaces; and that the military friend who is alluded to as having furnished him with some information as to Eastern matters, was Colonel James Ferguson of Huntly Burn, one of the sons of the venerable historian and philosopher of that name—which name he took the liberty of concealing under its Gaelic form of *Mac-Erries*.

W. S.

ABBOTSFORD,
September, 1831.

[Mr. Train was requested by Sir Walter Scott to give him in writing the story as nearly as possible in the shape in which he had told it; but the following narrative, which he drew up accordingly, did not reach Abbotsford until July, 1832.]

APPENDIX TO INTRODUCTION

In the old Stock of Fife, there was not perhaps an individual whose exertions were followed by consequences of such a remarkable nature as those of Davie Duff, popularly called 'The Thane of Fife', who, from a very humble parentage, rose to fill one of the chairs of the magistracy of his native burgh. By industry and economy in early life, he obtained the means of erecting, solely on his own account, one of those ingenious manufactories for which Fifeshire is justly celebrated. From the day on which the industrious artisan first took his seat at the Council Board, he attended so much to the interests of the little privileged community, that civic honours were conferred on him as rapidly as the Set of the Royalty [1] could legally admit.

To have the right of walking to church on holy-day preceded by a phalanx of halberdiers, in habiliments fashioned as in former times, seems, in the eyes of many a guild brother, to be a very enviable pitch of worldly grandeur. Few persons were ever more proud of civic honours than the Thane of Fife, but he knew well how to turn his political influence to the best account. The council, court, and other business of the burgh, occupied much of his time, which caused him to entrust the management of his manufactory to a near relation, whose name was D——, a young man of dissolute habits; but the Thane, seeing at last that, by continuing that extravagant person in that charge, his affairs would, in all probability, fall into a state of bankruptcy, applied to the member of Parliament for that district to obtain a situation for his relation in the civil department of the State. The knight, whom it is here unnecessary to name, knowing how effectually the Thane ruled the little burgh, applied in the proper quarter, and actually obtained an appointment for D—— in the civil service of the East India Company.

[1] The Constitution of the Borough.

A respectable surgeon, whose residence was in a neighbouring village, had a beautiful daughter named Emma, who had long been courted by D——. Immediately before his departure to India, as a mark of mutual affection they exchanged miniatures, taken by an eminent artist in Fife and each set in a locket, for the purpose of having the object of affection always in view.

The eyes of the old Thane were now turned towards Hindostan with much anxiety; but his relation had not long arrived in that distant quarter of the globe before he had the satisfaction of receiving a letter, conveying the welcome intelligence of his having taken possession of his new station in a large frontier town of the Company's dominions, and that great emoluments were attached to the situation; which was confirmed by several subsequent communications of the most gratifying description to the old Thane, who took great pleasure in spreading the news of the reformed habits and singular good fortune of his intended heir. None of all his former acquaintances heard with such joy the favourable report of the successful adventurer in the East, as did the fair and accomplished daughter of the village surgeon; but his previous character caused her to keep her own correspondence with him secret from her parents, to whom even the circumstance of her being acquainted with D—— was wholly unknown, till her father received a letter from him, in which he assured him of his attachment to Emma long before his departure from Fife; that having been so happy as to gain her affections, he would have made her his wife before leaving his native country, had he then had the means of supporting her in a suitable rank through life; and that, having it now in his power to do so, he only waited the consent of her parents to fulfil the vow he had formerly made.

The doctor having a large family, with a very limited income to support them, and understanding that D—— had at last become a person of sober and industrious habits, he gave his consent, in which Emma's mother fully concurred.

Aware of the straitened circumstances of the doctor, D—— remitted a sum of money to complete at Edinburgh Emma's Oriental education, and fit her out in her journey

to India ; she was to embark at Sheerness, on board one of the Company's ships, for a port in India, at which place, he said, he would wait her arrival, with a retinue suited to a person of his rank in society.

Emma set out from her father's house just in time to secure a passage as proposed by her intended husband, accompanied by her only brother, who, on their arrival at Sheerness, met one C——, an old schoolfellow, captain of the ship by which Emma was to proceed to India.

It was the particular desire of the doctor that his daughter should be committed to the care of that gentleman, from the time of her leaving the shores of Britain, till the intended marriage ceremony was duly performed on her arrival in India ; a charge that was frankly undertaken by the generous sea-captain.

On the arrival of the fleet at the appointed port, D——, with a large cavalcade of mounted Pindarees, was, as expected, in attendance, ready to salute Emma on landing, and to carry her direct into the interior of the country. C——, who had made several voyages to the shores of Hindostan, knowing something of Hindoo manners and customs, was surprised to see a private individual in the Company's service with so many attendants ; and when D—— declined having the marriage ceremony performed according to the rites of the Church, till he returned to the place of his abode, C——, more and more confirmed in his suspicion that all was not right, resolved not to part with Emma till he had fulfilled, in the most satisfactory manner, the promise he had made before leaving England, of giving her duly away in marriage. Not being able by her entreaties to alter the resolution of D——, Emma solicited her protector C—— to accompany her to the place of her intended destination, to which he most readily agreed, taking with him as many of his crew as he deemed sufficient to ensure the safe custody of his innocent protégée, should any attempt be made to carry her away by force.

Both parties journeyed onwards till they arrived at a frontier town, where a native Rajah was waiting the arrival of the fair maid of Fife, with whom he had fallen deeply in love, from seeing her miniature likeness in the possession of D——, to whom he had paid a large sum of

money for the original, and had only entrusted him to convey her in state to the seat of his government.

No sooner was this villanous action of D—— known to C——, than he communicated the whole particulars to the commanding officer of a regiment of Scotch Highlanders that happened to be quartered in that part of India, begging at the same time, for the honour of Caledonia and protection of injured innocence, that he would use the means in his power of resisting any attempt that might be made by the native chief to wrest from their hands the virtuous female who had been so shamefully decoyed from her native country by the worst of mankind. Honour occupies too large a space in the heart of the Gael to resist such a call of humanity.

The Rajah, finding his claim was not to be acceded to, and resolving to enforce the same, assembled his troops, and attacked with great fury the place where the affrighted Emma was for a time secured by her countrymen, who fought in her defence with all their native valour, which at length so overpowered their assailants that they were forced to retire in every direction, leaving behind many of their slain, among whom was found the mangled corpse of the perfidious D——.

C—— was immediately afterwards married to Emma, and my informant assured me he saw them many years afterwards, living happily together in the county of Kent, on the fortune bequeathed by the 'Thane of Fife'.

J. T.

Castle Douglas,
July, 1832.

MR. CROFTANGRY'S PREFACE

Indite, my muse, indite,
Subpoena'd is thy lyre,
The praises to requite
Which rules of court require.
Probationary Odes.

THE concluding a literary undertaking, in whole or in part, is, to the inexperienced at least, attended with an irritating titillation, like that which attends on the healing of a wound—a prurient impatience, in short, to know what the world in general, and friends in particular, will say to our labours. Some authors, I am told, profess an oyster-like indifference upon this subject; for my own part, I hardly believe in their sincerity. Others may acquire it from habit; but in my poor opinion, a neophyte like myself must be for a long time incapable of such *sang froid*.

Frankly, I was ashamed to feel how childishly I felt on the occasion. No person could have said prettier things than myself upon the importance of stoicism concerning the opinion of others, when their applause or censure refers to literary character only; and I had determined to lay my work before the public, with the same unconcern with which the ostrich lays her eggs in the sand, giving herself no further trouble concerning the incubation, but leaving to the atmosphere to bring forth the young, or otherwise, as the climate shall serve. But, though an ostrich in theory, I became in practice a poor hen, who has no sooner made her deposit, but she runs cackling about to call the attention of every one to the wonderful work which she has performed.

As soon as I became possessed of my first volume, neatly stitched up and boarded, my sense of the necessity of communicating with some one became ungovernable. Janet was inexorable, and seemed already to have tired of my literary confidence; for whenever I drew near the subject, after evading it as long as she could, she made,

under some pretext or other, a bodily retreat to the kitchen or the cockloft, her own peculiar and inviolate domains. My publisher would have been a natural resource ; but he understands his business too well, and follows it too closely, to desire to enter into literary discussions, wisely considering that he who has to sell books has seldom leisure to read them. Then my acquaintance, now that I have lost Mrs. Bethune Baliol, are of that distant and accidental kind, to whom I had not face enough to communicate the nature of my uneasiness, and who probably would only have laughed at me had I made any attempt to interest them in my labours.

Reduced thus to a sort of despair, I thought of my friend and man of business, Mr. Fairscribe. His habits, it was true, were not likely to render him indulgent to light literature, and, indeed, I had more than once noticed his daughters, and especially my little songstress, whip into her reticule what looked very like a circulating-library volume, as soon as her father entered the room. Still he was not only my assured, but almost my only friend, and I had little doubt that he would take an interest in the volume for the sake of the author, which the work itself might fail to inspire. I sent him, therefore, the book, carefully sealed up, with an intimation that I requested the favour of his opinion upon the contents, of which I affected to talk in the depreciatory style which calls for point-blank contradiction, if your correspondent possess a grain of civility.

This communication took place on a Monday, and I daily expected (what I was ashamed to anticipate by volunteering my presence, however sure of a welcome) an invitation to eat an egg, as was my friend's favourite phrase, or a card to drink tea with Misses Fairscribe, or a provocation to breakfast, at least, with my hospitable friend and benefactor, and to talk over the contents of my enclosure. But the hours and days passed on from Monday till Saturday, and I had no acknowledgement whatever that my packet had reached its destination. 'This is very unlike my good friend's punctuality,' thought I ; and having again and again vexed James, my male attendant, by a close examination concerning the time, place, and delivery, I had only to strain my imagination to conceive reasons for my friend's

silence. Sometimes I thought that his opinion of the work had proved so unfavourable that he was averse to hurt my feelings by communicating it—sometimes that, escaping his hands to whom it was destined, it had found its way into his writing-chamber and was become the subject of criticism to his smart clerks and conceited apprentices. 'Sdeath!' thought I, 'if I were sure of this, I would'——

'And what would you do?' said Reason, after a few moments' reflection. 'You are ambitious of introducing your book into every writing and reading-chamber in Edinburgh, and yet you take fire at the thoughts of its being criticized by Mr. Fairscribe's young people? Be a little consistent—for shame!'

'I will be consistent,' said I doggedly; 'but for all that, I will call on Mr. Fairscribe this evening.'

I hastened my dinner, donned my great-coat (for the evening threatened rain), and went to Mr. Fairscribe's house. The old domestic opened the door cautiously, and before I asked the question, said, 'Mr. Fairscribe is at home, sir; but it is Sunday night.' Recognizing, however, my face and voice, he opened the door wider, admitted me, and conducted me to the parlour, where I found Mr. Fairscribe and the rest of his family engaged in listening to a sermon by the late Mr. Walker of Edinburgh,[1] which was read by Miss Catherine with unusual distinctness, simplicity, and judgement. Welcomed as a friend of the house, I had nothing for it but to take my seat quietly, and making a virtue of necessity, endeavour to derive my share of the benefit arising from an excellent sermon. But I am afraid Mr. Walker's force of logic and precision of expression were somewhat lost upon me. I was sensible I had chosen an improper time to disturb Mr. Fairscribe, and when the discourse was ended, I rose to take my leave, somewhat hastily, I believe. 'A cup of tea, Mr. Croftangry?' said the young lady. 'You will wait and take part of a Presbyterian supper?' said Mr. Fairscribe. 'Nine o'clock—I make it a point of keeping my father's hours on Sunday at e'en. Perhaps Dr.—— (naming an excellent clergyman) may look in.'

[1] Robert Walker, the colleague and rival of Dr. Hugh Blair, in St. Giles's Church, Edinburgh.

I made my apology for declining his invitation; and I fancy my unexpected appearance, and hasty retreat, had rather surprised my friend, since, instead of accompanying me to the door, he conducted me into his own apartment.

'What is the matter,' he said, 'Mr. Croftangry? This is not a night for secular business, but if anything sudden or extraordinary has happened'——

'Nothing in the world,' said I, forcing myself upon confession, as the best way of clearing myself out of the scrape, 'only—only I sent you a little parcel, and as you are so regular in acknowledging letters and communications, I—I thought it might have miscarried—that's all.'

My friend laughed heartily, as if he saw into and enjoyed my motives and my confusion. 'Safe?—it came safe enough,' he said. 'The wind of the world always blows its vanities into haven. But this is the end of the session, when I have little time to read anything printed except Inner-House papers; yet if you will take your kail with us next Saturday, I will glance over your work, though I am sure I am no competent judge of such matters.'

With this promise I was fain to take my leave, not without half persuading myself that if once the phlegmatic lawyer began my lucubrations, he would not be able to rise from them till he had finished the perusal, nor to endure an interval betwixt his reading the last page, and requesting an interview with the author.

No such marks of impatience displayed themselves. Time, blunt or keen, as my friend Joanna says, swift or leisurely, held his course; and on the appointed Saturday, I was at the door precisely as it struck four. The dinner hour, indeed, was five punctually; but what did I know but my friend might want half an hour's conversation with me before that time? I was ushered into an empty drawing-room, and, from a needle-book and work-basket hastily abandoned, I had some reason to think I interrupted my little friend, Miss Katie, in some domestic labour more praiseworthy than elegant. In this critical age, filial piety must hide herself in a closet if she has a mind to darn her father's linen.

Shortly after, I was the more fully convinced that I had been too early an intruder when a wench came to fetch

away the basket, and recommend to my courtesies a red and green gentleman in a cage, who answered all my advances by croaking out, 'You're a fool—you're a fool, I tell you!' until, upon my word, I began to think the creature was in the right. At last my friend arrived, a little overheated. He had been taking a turn at golf, to prepare him for 'colloquy sublime'. And wherefore not? since the game, with its variety of odds, lengths, bunkers, tee'd balls, and so on, may be no inadequate representation of the hazards attending literary pursuits. In particular, those formidable buffets, which make one ball spin through the air like a rifle-shot, and strike another down into the very earth it is placed upon, by the maladroitness, or the malicious purpose of the player—what are they but parallels to the favourable or depreciating notices of the reviewers, who play at golf with the publications of the season, even as Altisidora, in her approach to the gates of the infernal regions, saw the devils playing at racket with the new books of Cervantes's days.

Well, every hour has its end. Five o'clock came, and my friend, with his daughters, and his handsome young son, who, though fairly buckled to the desk, is every now and then looking over his shoulder at a smart uniform, set seriously about satisfying the corporeal wants of nature; while I, stimulated by a nobler appetite after fame, wished that the touch of a magic wand could, without all the ceremony of picking and choosing, carving and slicing, masticating and swallowing, have transported a *quantum sufficit* of the good things on my friend's hospitable board into the stomachs of those who surrounded it, to be there at leisure converted into chyle while their thoughts were turned on higher matters. At length all was over. But the young ladies sat still, and talked of the music of the *Freischutz*, for nothing else was then thought of; so we discussed the wild hunter's song, and the tame hunter's song, &c., &c., in all which my young friends were quite at home. Luckily for me, all this horning and hooping drew on some allusion to the Seventh Hussars, which gallant regiment, I observe, is a more favourite theme with both Miss Catherine and her brother than with my old friend, who presently looked at his watch, and said something significantly to Mr. James

about office hours. The youth got up with the ease of a youngster that would be thought a man of fashion rather than of business, and endeavoured, with some success, to walk out of the room, as if the locomotion was entirely voluntary ; Miss Catherine and her sisters left us at the same time, and now, thought I, my trial comes on.

Reader, did you ever in the course of your life cheat the courts of justice and lawyers, by agreeing to refer a dubious and important question to the decision of a mutual friend ? If so, you may have remarked the relative change which the arbiter undergoes in your estimation, when raised, though by your own free choice, from an ordinary acquaintance, whose opinions were of as little consequence to you as yours to him, into a superior personage, on whose decision your fate must depend *pro tanto*, as my friend Mr. Fairscribe would say. His looks assume a mysterious if not a minatory expression ; his hat has a loftier air, and his wig, if he wears one, a more formidable buckle.

I felt, accordingly, that my good friend Fairscribe, on the present occasion, had acquired something of a similar increase of consequence. But a week since, he had, in my opinion, been indeed an excellent-meaning man, perfectly competent to everything within his own profession, but immured, at the same time, among its forms and technicalities, and as incapable of judging of matters of taste as any mighty Goth whatsoever, of or belonging to the ancient Senate House of Scotland. But what of that ? I had made him my judge by my own election ; and I have often observed that an idea of declining such a reference, on account of his own consciousness of incompetency, is, as it perhaps ought to be, the last which occurs to the referee himself. He that has a literary work subjected to his judgement by the author, immediately throws his mind into a critical attitude, though the subject be one which he never before thought of. No doubt the author is well qualified to select his own judge, and why should the arbiter whom he has chosen doubt his own talents for condemnation or acquittal, since he has been doubtless picked out by his friend from his undubitable reliance on their competence ? Surely the man who wrote the production is likely to know the person best qualified to judge of it.

Whilst these thoughts crossed my brain, I kept my eyes fixed on my good friend, whose motions appeared unusually tardy to me, while he ordered a bottle of particular claret, decanted it with scrupulous accuracy with his own hand, caused his old domestic to bring a saucer of olives and chips of toasted bread, and thus, on hospitable thoughts intent, seemed to me to adjourn the discussion which I longed to bring on yet feared to precipitate.

'He is dissatisfied,' thought I, 'and is ashamed to show it, afraid doubtless of hurting my feelings. What had I to do to talk to him about anything save charters and sasines? Stay, he is going to begin.'

'We are old fellows now, Mr. Croftangry,' said my landlord; 'scarcely so fit to take a poor quart of claret between us, as we would have been in better days to take a pint, in the old Scottish liberal acceptation of the phrase. Maybe you would have liked me to have kept James to help us. But if it is not a holiday or so, I think it is best he should observe office hours.'

Here the discourse was about to fall. I relieved it by saying, Mr. James was at the happy time of life when he had better things to do than to sit over the bottle. 'I suppose,' said I, 'your son is a reader.'

'Um—yes—James may be called a reader in a sense; but I doubt there is little solid in his studies—poetry and plays, Mr. Croftangry, all nonsense—they set his head a-gadding after the army, when he should be minding his business.'

'I suppose, then, that romances do not find much more grace in your eyes than dramatic and poetical compositions?'

'Deil a bit, deil a bit, Mr. Croftangry, nor historical productions either. There is too much fighting in history, as if men only were brought into this world to send one another out of it. It nourishes false notions of our being, and chief and proper end, Mr. Croftangry.'

Still all this was general, and I became determined to bring our discourse to a focus. 'I am afraid, then, I have done very ill to trouble you with my idle manuscripts, Mr. Fairscribe; but you must do me the justice to remember, that I had nothing better to do than to amuse myself

by writing the sheets I put into your hands the other day. I may truly plead—

I left no calling for this idle trade.'

'I cry your mercy, Mr. Croftangry,' said my old friend, suddenly recollecting—'yes, yes, I have been very rude; but I had forgotten entirely that you had taken a spell yourself at that idle man's trade.'

'I suppose,' replied I, 'you, on your side, have been too *busy* a man to look at my poor Chronicles?'

'No, no,' said my friend, 'I am not so bad as that neither. I have read them bit by bit, just as I could get a moment's time, and I believe I shall very soon get through them.'

'Well, my good friend?' said I interrogatively.

And '*Well*, Mr. Croftangry,' cried he, 'I really think you have got over the ground very tolerably well. I have noted down here two or three bits of things, which I presume to be errors of the press, otherwise it might be alleged, perhaps, that you did not fully pay that attention to the grammatical rules which one would desire to see rigidly observed.'

I looked at my friend's notes, which, in fact, showed, that in one or two grossly obvious passages, I had left uncorrected such solecisms in grammar.

'Well, well, I own my fault; but, setting apart these casual errors, how do you like the matter and the manner of what I have been writing, Mr. Fairscribe?'

'Why,' said my friend, pausing, with more grave and important hesitation than I thanked him for, 'there is not much to be said against the manner. The style is terse and intelligible, Mr. Croftangry, very intelligible; and that I consider as the first point in everything that is intended to be understood. There are, indeed, here and there some flights and fancies, which I comprehended with difficulty; but I got to your meaning at last. There are people that are like ponies; their judgements cannot go fast, but they go sure.'

'That is a pretty clear proposition, my friend; but then how did you like the meaning when you did get at it? or was that like some ponies, too difficult to catch, and, when catched, not worth the trouble?'

'I am far from saying that, my dear sir, in respect it would be downright uncivil; but since you ask my opinion, I wish you could have thought about something more appertaining to civil policy, than all this bloody work about shooting and dirking, and downright hanging. I am told it was the Germans who first brought in such a practice of choosing their heroes out of the Porteous Roll;[1] but, by my faith, we are like to be upsides with them. The first was, as I am credibly informed, Mr. Scolar, as they call him; a scholar-like piece of work he has made of it, with his robbers and thieves.'

'Schiller,' said I, 'my dear sir, let it be Schiller.'

'Shiller, or what you like,' said Mr. Fairscribe; 'I found the book where I wish I had found a better one, and that is, in Kate's work-basket. I sat down, and, like an old fool, began to read; but there, I grant, you have the better of Shiller, Mr. Croftangry.'

'I should be glad, my dear sir, that you really think I have *approached* that admirable author; even your friendly partiality ought not to talk of my having *excelled* him.'

'But I do say you have excelled him, Mr. Croftangry, in a most material particular. For surely a book of amusement should be something that one can take up and lay down at pleasure; and I can say justly, I was never at the least loss to put aside these sheets of yours when business came in the way. But, faith, this Shiller, sir, does not let you off so easily. I forgot one appointment on particular business, and I wilfully broke through another, that I might stay at home and finish his confounded book, which, after all, is about two brothers, the greatest rascals I ever heard of. The one, sir, goes near to murder his own father, and the other (which you would think still stranger) sets about to debauch his own wife.'

'I find, then, Mr. Fairscribe, that you have no taste for the romance of real life—no pleasure in contemplating those spirit-rousing impulses, which force men of fiery passions upon great crimes and great virtues?'

'Why, as to that, I am not just so sure. But then to mend the matter,' continued the critic, 'you have brought

[1] List of criminal indictments, so termed in Scotland.

in Highlanders into every story, as if you were going back again, *velis et remis*, into the old days of Jacobitism. I must speak my plain mind, Mr. Croftangry. I cannot tell what innovations in Kirk and State may now be proposed, but our fathers were friends to both, as they were settled at the glorious Revolution, and liked a tartan plaid as little as they did a white surplice. I wish to Heaven, all this tartan fever bode well to the Protestant succession and the Kirk of Scotland.'

'Both too well settled, I hope, in the minds of the subject,' said I, 'to be affected by old remembrances, on which we look back as on the portraits of our ancestors, without recollecting, while we gaze on them, any of the feuds by which the originals were animated while alive. But most happy should I be to light upon any topic to supply the place of the Highlands, Mr. Fairscribe. I have been just reflecting that the theme is becoming a little exhausted, and your experience may perhaps supply'——

'Ha, ha, ha!—*my* experience supply!' interrupted Mr. Fairscribe, with a laugh of derision;—'why, you might as well ask my son James's experience to supply a case about thirlage. No, no, my good friend, I have lived by the law, and in the law, all my life; and when you seek the impulses that make soldiers desert and shoot their sergeants and corporals, and Highland drovers dirk English graziers, to prove themselves men of fiery passions, it is not to a man like me you should come. I could tell you some tricks of my own trade, perhaps, and a queer story or two of estates that have been lost and recovered. But, to tell you the truth, I think you might do with your Muse of Fiction, as you call her, as many an honest man does with his own sons in flesh and blood.'

'And how is that, my dear sir?'

'Send her to India, to be sure. That is the true place for a Scot to thrive in; and if you carry your story fifty years back, as there is nothing to hinder you, you will find as much shooting and stabbing there as ever was in the wild Highlands. If you want rogues, as they are so much in fashion with you, you have that gallant caste of adventurers, who laid down their consciences at the Cape of Good Hope as they went out to India, and forgot to take

them up again when they returned. Then, for great exploits, you have in the old history of India, before Europeans were numerous there, the most wonderful deeds, done by the least possible means, that perhaps the annals of the world can afford.'

'I know it,' said I, kindling at the ideas his speech inspired. 'I remember in the delightful pages of Orme, the interest which mingles in his narratives, from the very small number of English which are engaged. Each officer of a regiment becomes known to you by name, nay, the non-commissioned officers and privates acquire an individual share of interest. They are distinguished among the natives like the Spaniards among the Mexicans. What do I say? They are like Homer's demigods among the warring mortals. Men, like Clive and Caillaud, influenced great events, like Jove himself. Inferior officers are like Mars or Neptune; and the sergeants and corporals might well pass for demigods. Then the various religious costumes, habits, and manners of the people of Hindostan—the patient Hindoo, the warlike Rajpoot, the haughty Moslemah, the savage and vindictive Malay—Glorious and unbounded subjects! The only objection is, that I have never been there, and know nothing at all about them.'

'Nonsense, my good friend. You will tell us about them all the better that you know nothing of what you are saying; and come, we'll finish the bottle, and when Katie (her sisters go to the assembly) has given us tea, she will tell you the outline of the story of poor Menie Gray, whose picture you will see in the drawing-room, a distant relation of my father's, who had, however, a handsome part of cousin Menie's succession. There are none living that can be hurt by the story now, though it was thought best to smother it up at the time, as indeed even the whispers about it led poor cousin Menie to live very retired. I mind her well when a child. There was something very gentle, but rather tiresome, about poor cousin Menie.'

When we came into the drawing-room, my friend pointed to a picture which I had before noticed, without, however, its having attracted more than a passing look; now I regarded it with more attention. It was one of those portraits of the middle of the eighteenth century, in which

artists endeavoured to conquer the stiffness of hoops and brocades, by throwing a fancy drapery around the figure, with loose folds like a mantle or dressing gown, the stays, however, being retained, and the bosom displayed in a manner which shows that our mothers, like their daughters, were as liberal of their charms as the nature of the dress might permit. To this, the well-known style of the period, the features and form of the individual added, at first sight, little interest. It represented a handsome woman of about thirty, her hair wound simply about her head, her features regular, and her complexion fair. But on looking more closely, especially after having had a hint that the original had been the heroine of a tale, I could observe a melancholy sweetness in the countenance that seemed to speak of woes endured, and injuries sustained, with that resignation which women can and do sometimes display under the insults and ingratitude of those on whom they have bestowed their affections.

'Yes, she was an excellent and an ill-used woman,' said Mr. Fairscribe, his eye fixed like mine on the picture—'She left our family not less, I dare say, than five thousand pounds, and I believe she died worth four times that sum; but it was divided among the nearest of kin, which was all fair.'

'But her history, Mr. Fairscribe,' said I—'to judge from her look, it must have been a melancholy one.'

'You may say that, Mr. Croftangry. Melancholy enough, and extraordinary enough too—But,' added he, swallowing in haste a cup of the tea which was presented to him, 'I must away to my business—we cannot be gowffing all the morning, and telling old stories all the afternoon. Katie knows all the outs and the ins of cousin Menie's adventures as well as I do, and when she has given you the particulars, then I am at your service to condescend more articulately upon dates or particulars.'

Well, here was I, a gay old bachelor, left to hear a love-tale from my young friend Katie Fairscribe, who, when she is not surrounded by a bevy of gallants, at which time to my thinking she shows less to advantage, is as pretty, well behaved, and unaffected a girl as you see tripping the new walks of Princes Street or Heriot Row. Old bachelorship

so decided as mine has its privileges in such a *tête-à-tête*, providing you are, or can seem for the time, perfectly good-humoured and attentive, and do not ape the manners of your younger years, in attempting which you will only make yourself ridiculous. I don't pretend to be so indifferent to the company of a pretty young woman as was desired by the poet, who wished to sit beside his mistress—

> —— As unconcern'd as when
> Her infant beauty could beget
> Nor happiness nor pain.

On the contrary, I can look on beauty and innocence as something of which I know and esteem the value, without the desire or hope to make them my own. A young lady can afford to talk with an old stager like me without either artifice or affectation; and we may maintain a species of friendship, the more tender, perhaps, because we are of different sexes, yet with which that distinction has very little to do.

Now, I hear my wisest and most critical neighbour remark, 'Mr. Croftangry is in the way of doing a foolish thing. He is well to pass—Old Fairscribe knows to a penny what he is worth, and Miss Katie, with all her airs, may like the old brass that buys the new pan. I thought Mr. Croftangry was looking very cadgy when he came in to play a rubber with us last night. Poor gentleman, I am sure I should be sorry to see him make a fool of himself.'

Spare your compassion, dear madam, there is not the least danger. The *beaux yeux de ma casette* are not brilliant enough to make amends for the spectacles which must supply the dimness of my own. I am a little deaf, too, as you know to your sorrow when we are partners; and if I could get a nymph to marry me with all these imperfections, who the deuce would marry Janet MacEvoy? and from Janet MacEvoy Chrystal Croftangry will not part.

Miss Katie Fairscribe gave me the tale of Menie Gray with much taste and simplicity, not attempting to suppress the feelings, whether of grief or resentment, which justly and naturally arose from the circumstances of the tale. Her father afterwards confirmed the principal outlines of the story, and furnished me with some additional

circumstances which Miss Katie had suppressed or forgotten. Indeed, I have learned on this occasion, what old Lintot meant when he told Pope that he used to propitiate the critics of importance, when he had a work in the press, by now and then letting them see a sheet of the blotted proof or a few leaves of the original manuscript. Our mystery of authorship hath something about it so fascinating that if you admit any one, however little he may previously have been disposed to such studies, into your confidence, you will find that he considers himself as a party interested, and, if success follows, will think himself entitled to no inconsiderable share of the praise.

The reader has seen that no one could have been naturally less interested than was my excellent friend Fairscribe in my lucubrations, when I first consulted him on the subject; but since he has contributed a subject to the work, he has become a most zealous coadjutor; and half-ashamed, I believe, yet half-proud of the literary stock-company in which he has got a share, he never meets me without jogging my elbow, and dropping some mysterious hints, as, 'I am saying—when will you give us any more of yon?'—or, 'Yon's not a bad narrative—I like yon.'

Pray Heaven the reader may be of his opinion.

THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER I

When fainting Nature call'd for aid,
And hovering Death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
The power of art without the show;
In Misery's darkest caverns known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely Want retired to die;
No summons mock'd by cold delay,
No petty gains disclaim'd by pride,
The modest wants of every day
The toil of every day supplied.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

THE exquisitely beautiful portrait which the Rambler has painted of his friend Levett, well describes Gideon Gray, and many other village doctors, from whom Scotland reaps more benefit, and to whom she is perhaps more ungrateful than to any other class of men, excepting her schoolmasters.

Such a rural man of medicine is usually the inhabitant of some pretty borough or village, which forms the central point of his practice. But, besides attending to such cases as the village may afford, he is day and night at the service of every one who may command his assistance within a circle of forty miles in diameter, untraversed by roads in many directions, and including moors, mountains, rivers, and lakes. For late and dangerous journeys through an inaccessible country, for services of the most essential kind, rendered at the expense, or risk at least, of his own health and life, the Scottish village doctor receives at best a very moderate recompense, often one which is totally inadequate, and very frequently none whatever. He has none of the ample resources proper to the brothers of the profession in

an English town. The burgesses of a Scottish borough are rendered, by their limited means of luxury, inaccessible to gout, surfeits, and all the comfortable chronic diseases which are attendant on wealth and indolence. Four years, or so, of abstemiousness, enable them to stand an election dinner ; and there is no hope of broken heads among a score or two of quiet electors, who settle the business over a table. There the mothers of the state never make a point of pouring, in the course of every revolving year, a certain quantity of doctor's stuff through the bowels of their beloved children. Every old woman, from the Townhead to the Townfit, can prescribe a dose of salts or spread a plaster ; and it is only when a fever or a palsy renders matters serious, that the assistance of the doctor is invoked by his neighbours in the borough.

But still the man of science cannot complain of inactivity or want of practice. If he does not find patients at his door, he seeks them through a wide circle. Like the ghostly lover of Bürger's Leonora, he mounts at midnight, and traverses in darkness paths which, to those less accustomed to them, seem formidable in daylight, through straits where the slightest aberration would plunge him into a morass or throw him over a precipice, on to cabins which his horse might ride over without knowing they lay in his way, unless he happened to fall through the roofs. When he arrives at such a stately termination of his journey, where his services are required either to bring a wretch into the world or prevent one from leaving it, the scene of misery is often such that, far from touching the hard-saved shillings which are gratefully offered to him, he bestows his medicines as well as his attendance—for charity. I have heard the celebrated traveller Mungo Park, who had experienced both courses of life, rather give the preference to travelling as a discoverer in Africa, than to wandering by night and day the wilds of his native land in the capacity of a country medical practitioner. He mentioned having once upon a time rode forty miles, sat up all night, and successfully assisted a woman under influence of the primitive curse, for which his sole remuneration was a roasted potato and a draught of buttermilk. But his was not the heart which grudged the labour that relieved human misery. In short,

there is no creature in Scotland that works harder and is more poorly requited than the country doctor, unless perhaps it may be his horse. Yet the horse is, and indeed must be, hardy, active, and indefatigable, in spite of a rough coat and indifferent condition ; and so you will often find in his master, under an unpromising and blunt exterior, professional skill and enthusiasm, intelligence, humanity, courage, and science.

Mr. Gideon Gray, surgeon in the village of Middlemas, situated in one of the midland counties of Scotland, led the rough, active, and ill-rewarded course of life which we have endeavoured to describe. He was a man between forty and fifty, devoted to his profession, and of such reputation in the medical world that he had been more than once, as opportunities occurred, advised to exchange Middlemas and its meagre circle of practice, for some of the larger towns in Scotland or for Edinburgh itself. This advice he had always declined. He was a plain blunt man, who did not love restraint, and was unwilling to subject himself to that which was exacted in polite society. He had not himself found out, nor had any friend hinted to him, that a slight touch of the cynic, in manner and habits, gives the physician, to the common eye, an air of authority which greatly tends to enlarge his reputation. Mr. Gray, or, as the country people called him, Doctor Gray (he might hold the title by diploma for what I know, though he only claimed the rank of Master of Arts), had few wants, and these were amply supplied by a professional income which generally approached two hundred pounds a-year, for which, upon an average, he travelled about five thousand miles on horseback in the course of the twelve months. Nay, so liberally did this revenue support himself and his ponies, called Pestle and Mortar, which he exercised alternately, that he took a damsel to share it, Jean Watson, namely, the cherry-cheeked daughter of an honest farmer, who being herself one of twelve children who had been brought up on an income of fourscore pounds a-year, never thought there could be poverty in more than double the sum ; and looked on Gray, though now termed by irreverent youth the Old Doctor, as a very advantageous match. For several years they had no children, and it seemed as if

Doctor Gray, who had so often assisted the efforts of the goddess Lucina, was never to invoke her in his own behalf. Yet his domestic roof was, on a remarkable occasion, decreed to be the scene where the goddess's art was required.

Late of an autumn evening three old women might be observed plying their aged limbs through the single street of the village at Middlemas towards the honoured door, which, fenced off from the vulgar causeway, was defended by a broken paling, enclosing two slips of ground, half arable, half overrun with an abortive attempt at shrubbery. The door itself was blazoned with the name of Gideon Gray, M.A., Surgeon, &c., &c. Some of the idle young fellows, who had been a minute or two before loitering at the other end of the street before the door of the alehouse (for the pretended inn deserved no better name), now accompanied the old dames with shouts of laughter, excited by their unwonted agility; and with bets on the winner, as loudly expressed as if they had been laid at the starting-post of Middlemas races. 'Half a mutchkin on Luckie Simson!' 'Auld Peg Tamson against the field!' 'Mair speed, Alison Jaup, ye'll tak the wind out of them yet!' 'Canny against the hill, lasses, or we may have a brusten auld carline amang ye!' These, and a thousand such gibes, rent the air, without being noticed, or even heard, by the anxious racers, whose object of contention seemed to be, which should first reach the doctor's door.

'Guide us, Doctor, what can be the matter now?' said Mrs. Gray, whose character was that of a good-natured simpleton; 'Here's Peg Tamson, Jean Simson, and Alison Jaup, running a race on the hie street of the burgh!'

The doctor, who had but the moment before hung his wet great-coat before the fire (for he was just dismounted from a long journey), hastened down stairs, auguring some new occasion for his services, and happy that, from the character of the messengers, it was likely to be within burgh and not landward.

He had just reached the door as Luckie Simson, one of the racers, arrived in the little area before it. She had got the start, and kept it, but at the expense, for the time, of her power of utterance; for when she came in presence of the doctor, she stood blowing like a grampus, her loose toy

THE OLD WOMEN OF MIDDLEMAS AT DR. GRAY'S DOOR

flying back from her face, making the most violent efforts to speak, but without the power of uttering a single intelligible word. Peg Thomson whipped in before her.

'The leddy, sir, the leddy!'——

'Instant help, instant help!' screeched, rather than uttered, Alison Jaup; while Luckie Simson, who had certainly won the race, found words to claim the prize which had set them all in motion.

'And I hope, sir, you will recommend me to be the sick-nurse; I was here to bring you the tidings lang before ony o' thae lazy queans.'

Loud were the counter-protestations of the two competitors, and loud the laugh of the idle *loons* who listened at a little distance.

'Hold your tongue, ye flyting fools,' said the doctor; 'and you, ye idle rascals, if I come out among you.' So saying, he smacked his long-lashed whip with great emphasis, producing much the effect of the celebrated *Quos ego* of Neptune in the first Aeneid. 'And now,' said the doctor, 'where, or who, is this lady?'

The question was scarce necessary; for a plain carriage, with four horses, came at a foot's pace towards the door of the doctor's house, and the old women, now more at their ease, gave the doctor to understand that the gentleman thought the accommodation of the Swan Inn totally unfit for his lady's rank and condition, and had, by their advice (each claiming the merit of the suggestion), brought her here, to experience the hospitality of the *west room*—a spare apartment, in which Dr. Gray occasionally accommodated such patients as he desired to keep for a space of time under his own eye.

There were two persons only in the vehicle. The one, a gentleman in a riding-dress, sprang out, and having received from the doctor an assurance that the lady would receive tolerable accommodation in his house, he lent assistance to his companion to leave the carriage, and with great apparent satisfaction, saw her safely deposited in a decent sleeping apartment, and under the respectable charge of the doctor and his lady, who assured him once more of every species of attention. To bind their promise more firmly, the stranger slipped a purse of twenty guineas

(for this story chanced in the golden age) into the hand of the doctor, as an earnest of the most liberal recompense, and requested he would spare no expense in providing all that was necessary or desirable for a person in the lady's condition, and for the helpless being to whom she might immediately be expected to give birth. He then said he would retire to the inn, where he begged a message might instantly acquaint him with the expected change in the lady's situation.

'She is of rank,' he said, 'and a foreigner; let no expense be spared. We designed to have reached Edinburgh, but were forced to turn off the road by an accident.' Once more he said, 'Let no expense be spared, and manage that she may travel as soon as possible.'

'That,' said the doctor, 'is past my control. Nature must not be hurried, and she avenges herself of every attempt to do so.'

'But art,' said the stranger, 'can do much,' and he proffered a second purse, which seemed as heavy as the first.

'Art,' said the doctor, 'may be recompensed, but cannot be purchased. You have already paid me more than enough to take the utmost care I can of your lady; should I accept more money, it could only be for promising, by implication at least, what is beyond my power to perform. Every possible care shall be taken of your lady, and that affords the best chance of her being speedily able to travel. Now, go you to the inn, sir, for I may be instantly wanted, and we have not yet provided either an attendant for the lady, or a nurse for the child; but both shall be presently done.'

'Yet a moment, doctor—what languages do you understand?'

'Latin and French I can speak indifferently, and so as to be understood; and I read a little Italian.'

'But no Portuguese or Spanish?' continued the stranger.

'No, sir.'

'That is unlucky. But you may make her understand you by means of French. Take notice, you are to comply with her request in everything—if you want means to do so, you may apply to me.'

'May I ask, sir, by what name the lady is to be ——

'It is totally indifferent,' said the stranger, interrupting the question; 'You shall know it at more leisure.'

So saying, he threw his ample cloak about him, turning himself half round to assist the operation, with an air which the doctor would have found it difficult to imitate, and walked down the street to the little inn. Here he paid and dismissed the postilions, and shut himself up in an apartment, ordering no one to be admitted till the doctor should call.

The doctor, when he returned to his patient's apartment, found his wife in great surprise, which, as is usual with persons of her character, was not unmixed with fear and anxiety.

'She cannot speak a word like a Christian being,' said Mrs. Gray.

'I know it,' said the doctor.

'But she threeps to keep on a black fause-face, and skirls if we offer to take it away.'

'Well then, let her wear it—What harm will it do?'

'Harm, doctor! Was ever honest woman brought to bed with a fause-face on?'

'Seldom, perhaps. But, Jean, my dear, those who are not quite honest must be brought to bed all the same as those who are, and we are not to endanger the poor thing's life by contradicting her whims at present.'

Approaching the sick woman's bed, he observed that she indeed wore a thin silk mask, of the kind which do such uncommon service in the elder comedy; such as women of rank still wore in travelling, but certainly never in the situation of this poor lady. It would seem she had sustained importunity on the subject, for when she saw the doctor, she put her hand to her face, as if she was afraid he would insist on pulling off the vizard.

He hastened to say, in tolerable French, that her will should be a law to them in every respect, and that she was at perfect liberty to wear the mask till it was her pleasure to lay it aside. She understood him; for she replied, by a very imperfect attempt, in the same language, to express her gratitude for the permission, as she seemed to regard it, of retaining her disguise.

The doctor proceeded to other arrangements; and, for the satisfaction of those readers who may love minute information, we record that Luckie Simson, the first in the race, carried as a prize the situation of sick-nurse beside the delicate patient; that Peg Thomson was permitted the privilege of recommending her good-daughter, Bet Jamieson, to be wet-nurse; and an *oe*, or grandchild, of Luckie Jaup was hired to assist in the increased drudgery of the family; the doctor thus, like a practised minister, dividing among his trusty adherents such good things as fortune placed at his disposal.

About one in the morning the doctor made his appearance at the Swan Inn, and acquainted the stranger gentleman that he wished him joy of being the father of a healthy boy, and that the mother was, in the usual phrase, as well as could be expected.

The stranger heard the news with seeming satisfaction, and then exclaimed, 'He must be christened, doctor! he must be christened instantly!'

'There can be no hurry for that,' said the doctor.

'*We* think otherwise,' said the stranger, cutting his argument short. 'I am a Catholic, doctor, and as I may be obliged to leave this place before the lady is able to travel, I desire to see my child received into the pale of the Church. There is, I understand, a Catholic priest in this wretched place?'

'There is a Catholic gentleman, sir, Mr. Goodriche, who is reported to be in orders.'

'I commend your caution, doctor,' said the stranger; 'it is dangerous to be too positive on any subject. I will bring that same Mr. Goodriche to your house to-morrow.'

Gray hesitated for a moment. 'I am a Presbyterian Protestant, sir,' he said, 'a friend to the constitution as established in Church and State, as I have a good right, having drawn his Majesty's pay, God bless him, for four years, as surgeon's mate in the Cameronian regiment, as my regimental Bible and commission can testify. But although I be bound especially to abhor all trafficking or trinketing with Papists, yet I will not stand in the way of a tender conscience. Sir, you may call with Mr. Goodriche, when you please, at my house; and undoubtedly, you

being, as I suppose, the father of the child, you will arrange matters as you please ; only, I do not desire to be thought an abettor or countenancer of any part of the Popish ritual.'

'Enough, sir,' said the stranger haughtily, 'we understand each other.'

The next day he appeared at the doctor's house with Mr. Goodriche, and two persons understood to belong to that reverend gentleman's communion. The party were shut up in an apartment with the infant, and it may be presumed that the solemnity of baptism was administered to the unconscious being thus strangely launched upon the world. When the priest and witnesses had retired, the strange gentleman informed Mr. Gray, that, as the lady had been pronounced unfit for travelling for several days, he was himself about to leave the neighbourhood, but would return thither in the space of ten days, when he hoped to find his companion able to leave it.

'And by what name are we to call the child and mother ?'

'The infant's name is Richard.'

'But it must have some surname—so must the lady—She cannot reside in my house, yet be without a name.'

'Call them by the name of your town here—Middlemas, I think it is ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, Mrs. Middlemas is the name of the mother, and Richard Middlemas of the child—and I am Matthew Middlemas, at your service. This,' he continued, 'will provide Mrs. Middlemas in everything she may wish to possess—or assist her in case of accidents.' With that he placed £100 in Mr. Gray's hand, who rather scrupled receiving it, saying, 'He supposed the lady was qualified to be her own purse-bearer.'

'The worst in the world, I assure you, doctor,' replied the stranger. 'If she wished to change that piece of paper, she would scarce know how many guineas she should receive for it. No, Mr. Gray, I assure you you will find Mrs. Middleton—Middlemas—what did I call her—as ignorant of the affairs of this world as any one you have met with in your practice : so you will please to be her treasurer and administrator for the time, as for a patient that is incapable to look after her own affairs.'

This was spoke, as it struck Dr. Gray, in rather a haughty and supercilious manner. The words intimated nothing in themselves, more than the same desire of preserving incognito, which might be gathered from all the rest of the stranger's conduct ; but the manner seemed to say, ' I am not a person to be questioned by any one—what I say must be received without comment, how little soever you may believe or understand it.' It strengthened Gray in his opinion that he had before him a case either of seduction, or of private marriage, betwixt persons of the very highest rank ; and the whole bearing, both of the lady and the gentleman, confirmed his suspicions. It was not in his nature to be troublesome or inquisitive, but he could not fail to see that the lady wore no marriage-ring ; and her deep sorrow, and perpetual tremor, seemed to indicate an unhappy creature, who had lost the protection of parents without acquiring a legitimate right to that of a husband. He was therefore somewhat anxious when Mr. Middlemas, after a private conference of some length with the lady, bade him farewell. It is true, he assured him of his return within ten days, being the very shortest space which Gray could be prevailed upon to assign for any prospect of the lady being moved with safety.

' I trust in Heaven that he will return,' said Gray to himself, ' but there is too much mystery about all this, for the matter being a plain and well-meaning transaction. If he intends to treat this poor thing as many a poor girl has been used before, I hope that my house will not be the scene in which he chooses to desert her. The leaving the money has somewhat a suspicious aspect, and looks as if my friend were in the act of making some compromise with his conscience. Well—I must hope the best. Meantime, my path plainly is to do what I can for the poor lady's benefit.'

Mr. Gray visited his patient shortly after Mr. Middlemas's departure—as soon, indeed, as he could be admitted. He found her in violent agitation. Gray's experience dictated the best mode of relief and tranquillity. He caused her infant to be brought to her. She wept over it for a long time, and the violence of her agitation subsided under the influence of parental feelings, which, from her appearance

of extreme youth, she must have experienced for the first time.

The observant physician could, after this paroxysm, remark that his patient's mind was chiefly occupied in computing the passage of the time, and anticipating the period when the return of her husband—if husband he was —might be expected. She consulted almanacs, inquired concerning distances, though so cautiously as to make it evident she desired to give no indication of the direction of her companion's journey, and repeatedly compared her watch with those of others ; exercising, it was evident, all that delusive species of mental arithmetic by which mortals attempt to accelerate the passage of Time while they calculate his progress. At other times she wept anew over her child, which was by all judges pronounced as goodly an infant as needed to be seen ; and Gray sometimes observed that she murmured sentences to the unconscious infant, not only the words, but the very sound and accents of which were strange to him, and which, in particular, he knew not to be Portuguese.

Mr. Goodriche, the Catholic priest, demanded access to her upon one occasion. She at first declined his visit, but afterwards received it, under the idea, perhaps, that he might have news from Mr. Middlemas, as he called himself. The interview was a very short one, and the priest left the lady's apartment in displeasure, which his prudence could scarce disguise from Mr. Gray. He never returned, although the lady's condition would have made his attentions and consolations necessary, had she been a member of the Catholic Church.

Our doctor began at length to suspect his fair guest was a Jewess, who had yielded up her person and affections to one of a different religion ; and the peculiar style of her beautiful countenance went to enforce this opinion. The circumstance made no difference to Gray, who saw only her distress and desolation, and endeavoured to remedy both to the utmost of his power. He was, however, desirous to conceal it from his wife and the others around the sick person, whose prudence and liberality of thinking might be more justly doubted. He therefore so regulated her diet that she could not be either offended, or brought under

suspicion, by any of the articles forbidden by the Mosaic law being presented to her. In other respects than what concerned her health or convenience, he had but little intercourse with her.

The space passed within which the stranger's return to the borough had been so anxiously expected by his female companion. The disappointment occasioned by his non-arrival was manifested in the convalescent by inquietude which was at first mingled with peevishness, and afterwards with doubt and fear. When two or three days had passed without message or letter of any kind, Gray himself became anxious, both on his own account and the poor lady's, lest the stranger should have actually entertained the idea of deserting this defenceless and probably injured woman. He longed to have some communication with her, which might enable him to judge what inquiries could be made, or what else was most fitting to be done. But so imperfect was the poor young woman's knowledge of the French language, and perhaps so unwilling she herself to throw any light on her situation, that every attempt of this kind proved abortive. When Gray asked questions concerning any subject which appeared to approach to explanation, he observed she usually answered him by shaking her head, in token of not understanding what he said ; at other times by silence and with tears, and sometimes referring him to *Monsieur*.

For *Monsieur's* arrival, then, Gray began to become very impatient, as that which alone could put an end to a disagreeable species of mystery, which the good company of the borough began now to make the principal subject of their gossip ; some blaming Gray for taking foreign *landloupers* [1] into his house, on the subject of whose morals the most serious doubts might be entertained ; others envying the ' bonny hand ' the doctor was like to make of it, by having disposal of the wealthy stranger's travelling funds ; a circumstance which could not be well concealed from the public, when the honest man's expenditure for trifling articles of luxury came far to exceed its ordinary bounds.

The conscious probity of the honest doctor enabled him

[1] Strollers.

to despise this sort of tittle-tattle, though the secret knowledge of its existence could not be agreeable to him. He went his usual rounds with his usual perseverance, and waited with patience until time should throw light on the subject and history of his lodger. It was now the fourth week after her confinement, and the recovery of the stranger might be considered as perfect, when Gray, returning from one of his ten-mile visits, saw a post-chaise and four horses at the door. 'This man has returned,' he said, 'and my suspicions have done him less than justice.' With that he spurred his horse, a signal which the trusty steed obeyed the more readily, as its progress was in the direction of the stable door. But when, dismounting, the doctor hurried into his own house, it seemed to him that the departure as well as the arrival of this distressed lady was destined to bring confusion to his peaceful dwelling. Several idlers had assembled about his door, and two or three had impudently thrust themselves forward almost into the passage, to listen to a confused altercation which was heard from within.

The doctor hastened forward, the foremost of the intruders retreating in confusion on his approach, while he caught the tones of his wife's voice, raised to a pitch which he knew, by experience, boded no good; for Mrs. Gray, good-humoured and tractable in general, could sometimes perform the high part in a matrimonial duet. Having much more confidence in his wife's good intentions than her prudence, he lost no time in pushing into the parlour to take the matter into his own hands. Here he found his helpmate at the head of the whole militia of the sick lady's apartment, that is, wet nurse, and sick nurse, and girl of all work, engaged in violent dispute with two strangers. The one was a dark-featured elderly man, with an eye of much sharpness and severity of expression which now seemed partly quenched by a mixture of grief and mortification. The other, who appeared actively sustaining the dispute with Mrs. Gray, was a stout, bold-looking, hard-faced person, armed with pistols, of which he made rather an unnecessary and ostentatious display.

'Here is my husband, sir,' said Mrs. Gray, in a tone of triumph, for she had the grace to believe the doctor one of

the greatest men living,—'Here is the doctor—let us see what you will say now.'

'Why just what I said before, ma'am,' answered the man, 'which is, that my warrant must be obeyed. It is regular, ma'am, regular.'

So saying, he struck the forefinger of his right hand against a paper which he held towards Mrs. Gray with his left.

'Address yourself to me, if you please, sir,' said the doctor, seeing that he ought to lose no time in removing the cause into the proper court. 'I am the master of this house, sir, and I wish to know the cause of this visit.'

'My business is soon told,' said the man. 'I am a king's messenger, and this lady has treated me as if I was a baron-bailie's officer.'

'That is not the question, sir,' replied the doctor. 'If you are a king's messenger, where is your warrant, and what do you propose to do here?' At the same time he whispered the little wench to call Mr. Lawford, the town-clerk, to come thither as fast as he possibly could. The good-daughter of Peg Thomson started off with an activity worthy of her mother-in-law.

'There is my warrant,' said the official, 'and you may satisfy yourself.'

'The shameless loon dare not tell the doctor his errand,' said Mrs. Gray exultingly.

'A bonny errand it is,' said old Luckie Simson, 'to carry away a lying-in woman as a gled [1] would do a clocking-hen.'

'A woman no a month delivered,'—echoed the nurse Jamieson.

'Twenty-four days, eight hours, and seven minutes, to a second,' said Mrs. Gray.

The doctor having looked over the warrant, which was regular, began to be afraid that the females of his family, in their zeal for defending the character of their sex, might be stirred up into some sudden fit of mutiny, and therefore commanded them to be silent.

'This,' he said, 'is a warrant for arresting the bodies of Richard Tresham, and of Zilia de Monçada, on account of high treason. Sir, I have served his Majesty, and this is

[1] Or kite.

not a house in which traitors are harboured. I know nothing of any of these two persons, nor have I ever heard even their names.'

'But the lady whom you have received into your family,' said the messenger, 'is Zilia de Monçada, and here stands her father, Matthias de Monçada, who will make oath to it.'

'If this be true,' said Mr. Gray, looking towards the alleged officer, 'you have taken a singular duty on you. It is neither my habit to deny my own actions, nor to oppose the laws of the land. There is a lady in this house slowly recovering from confinement, having become under this roof the mother of a healthy child. If she be the person described in this warrant, and this gentleman's daughter, I must surrender her to the laws of the country.'

Here the Esculapian militia were once more in motion.

'Surrender, Dr. Gray! It 's a shame to hear you speak, and you that lives by women and weans, abune your other means!' so exclaimed his fair better part.

'I wonder to hear the doctor!'—said the younger nurse; 'there 's no a wife in the town would believe it o' him.'

'I aye thought the doctor was a man till this moment,' said Luckie Simson; 'but I believe him now to be an auld wife, little baulder than mysell; and I dinna wonder now that poor Mrs. Gray'——

'Hold your peace, you foolish woman,' said the doctor. 'Do you think this business is not bad enough already, that you are making it worse with your senseless claver?[1] Gentlemen, this is a very sad case. Here is a warrant for a high crime against a poor creature, who is little fit to be removed from one house to another, much more dragged to a prison. I tell you plainly, that I think the execution of this arrest may cause her death. It is your business, sir, if you be really her father, to consider what you can do to soften this matter, rather than drive it on.'

'Better death than dishonour,' replied the stern-looking old man, with a voice as harsh as his aspect; 'and you, messenger,' he continued, 'look what you do, and execute the warrant at your peril.'

'You hear,' said the man, appealing to the doctor himself, 'I must have immediate access to the lady.'

[1] Tattling.

'In a lucky time,' said Mr. Gray, 'here comes the town-clerk. You are very welcome, Mr. Lawford. Your opinion here is much wanted as a man of law as well as of sense and humanity. I was never more glad to see you in all my life.'

He then rapidly stated the case; and the messenger, understanding the new-comer to be a man of some authority, again exhibited his warrant.

'This is a very sufficient and valid warrant, Dr. Gray,' replied the man of law. 'Nevertheless, if you are disposed to make oath that instant removal would be unfavourable to the lady's health, unquestionably she must remain here, suitably guarded.'

'It is not so much the mere act of locomotion which I am afraid of,' said the surgeon; 'but I am free to depone, on soul and conscience, that the shame and fear of her father's anger, and the sense of the affront of such an arrest, with terror for its consequences, may occasion violent and dangerous illness—even death itself.'

'The father must see the daughter, though they may have quarrelled,' said Mr. Lawford; 'the officer of justice must execute his warrant though it should frighten the criminal to death; these evils are only contingent, not direct and immediate consequences. You must give up the lady, Mr. Gray, though your hesitation is very natural.'

'At least, Mr. Lawford, I ought to be certain that the person in my house is the party they search for.'

'Admit me to her apartment,' replied the man whom the messenger termed Monçada.

The messenger, whom the presence of Lawford had made something more placid, began to become impudent once more. He hoped, he said, by means of his female prisoner, to acquire the information necessary to apprehend the more guilty person. If more delays were thrown in his way, that information might come too late, and he would make all who were accessory to such delay responsible for the consequences.

'And I,' said Mr. Gray, 'though I were to be brought to the gallows for it, protest that this course may be the murder of my patient. Can bail not be taken, Mr. Lawford?'

'Not in cases of high treason,' said the official person; and then continued in a confidential tone, 'Come, Mr. Gray,

we all know you to be a person well affected to our Royal Sovereign King George and the Government; but you must not push this too far, lest you bring yourself into trouble, which everybody in Middlemas would be sorry for. The Forty-Five has not been so far gone by, but we can remember enough of warrants of high treason—aye, and ladies of quality committed upon such charges. But they were all favourably dealt with—Lady Ogilvy, Lady MacIntosh, Flora Macdonald, and all. No doubt this gentleman knows what he is doing and has assurances of the young lady's safety—So you must just jouk and let the jaw gae by, as we say.'

'Follow me, then, gentleman,' said Gideon, 'and you shall see the young lady;' and then, his strong features working with emotion at anticipation of the distress which he was about to inflict, he led the way up the small staircase, and opening the door, said to Monçada who had followed him, 'This is your daughter's only place of refuge, in which I am, alas! too weak to be her protector. Enter, sir, if your conscience will permit you.'

The stranger turned on him a scowl, into which it seemed as if he would willingly have thrown the power of the fabled basilisk. Then stepping proudly forward, he stalked into the room. He was followed by Lawford and Gray at a little distance. The messenger remained in the doorway. The unhappy young woman had heard the disturbance, and guessed the cause too truly. It is possible she might even have seen the strangers on their descent from the carriage. When they entered the room, she was on her knees, beside an easy chair, her face in a silk wrapper that was hung over it. The man called Monçada uttered a single word; by the accent it might have been something equivalent to *wretch*; but none knew its import. The female gave a convulsive shudder, such as that by which a half-dying soldier is affected on receiving a second wound. But, without minding her emotion, Monçada seized her by the arm, and with little gentleness raised her to her feet, on which she seemed to stand only because she was supported by his strong grasp. He then pulled from her face the mask which she had hitherto worn. The poor creature still endeavoured to shroud her face by covering it with her left hand, as the

manner in which she was held prevented her from using the aid of the right. With little effort her father secured that hand also, which indeed was of itself far too little to serve the purpose of concealment, and showed her beautiful face, burning with blushes and covered with tears.

'You, Alcalde, and you, Surgeon,' he said to Lawford and Gray, with a foreign action and accent, 'this woman is my daughter, the same Zilia Monçada who is signalled in that protocol. Make way, and let me carry her where her crimes may be atoned for.'

'Are you that person's daughter?' said Lawford to the lady.

'She understands no English,' said Gray; and addressing his patient in French, conjured her to let him know whether she was that man's daughter or not, assuring her of protection if the fact were otherwise. The answer was murmured faintly, but was too distinctly intelligible—'He was her father.'

All further title of interference seemed now ended. The messenger arrested his prisoner, and, with some delicacy, required the assistance of the females to get her conveyed to the carriage in waiting.

Gray again interfered. 'You will not,' he said, 'separate the mother and the infant?'

Zilia de Monçada heard the question (which, being addressed to the father, Gray had inconsiderately uttered in French) and it seemed as if it recalled to her recollection the existence of the helpless creature to which she had given birth, forgotten for a moment amongst the accumulated horrors of her father's presence. She uttered a shriek, expressing poignant grief, and turned her eyes on her father with the most intense supplication.

'To the parish with the bastard!'—said Monçada; while the helpless mother sank lifeless into the arms of the females who had now gathered round her.

'That will not pass, sir,' said Gideon. 'If you are father to that lady, you must be grandfather to the helpless child; and you must settle in some manner for its future provision, or refer us to some responsible person.'

Monçada looked towards Lawford, who expressed himself satisfied of the propriety of what Gray said.

'I object not to pay for whatever the wretched child may require,' said he; 'and if you, sir,' addressing Gray, 'choose to take charge of him, and breed him up, you shall have what will better your living.'

The doctor was about to refuse a charge so uncivilly offered; but after a moment's reflection he replied, 'I think so indifferently of the proceedings I have witnessed and of those concerned in them, that if the mother desires that I should retain the charge of this child, I will not refuse to do so.'

Monçada spoke to his daughter, who was just beginning to recover from her swoon, in the same language in which he had first addressed her. The proposition which he made seemed highly acceptable, as she started from the arms of the females, and, advancing to Gray, seized his hand, kissed it, bathed it in her tears, and seemed reconciled, even in parting with her child, by the consideration that the infant was to remain under his guardianship.

'Good, kind man,' she said in her indifferent French, 'you have saved both mother and child.'

The father, meanwhile, with mercantile deliberation, placed in Mr. Lawford's hands notes and bills to the amount of a thousand pounds, which he stated was to be vested for the child's use, and advanced in such portions as his board and education might require. In the event of any correspondence on his account being necessary, as in case of death or the like, he directed that communication should be made to Signor Matthias Monçada, under cover to a certain banking-house in London.

'But beware,' he said to Gray, 'how you trouble me about these concerns, unless in case of absolute necessity.'

'You need not fear, sir,' replied Gray; 'I have seen nothing to-day which can induce me to desire a more intimate correspondence with you than may be indispensable.'

While Lawford drew up a proper minute of this transaction, by which he himself and Gray were named trustees for the child, Mr. Gray attempted to restore to the lady the balance of the considerable sum of money which Tresham (if such was his real name) had formally deposited with him. With every species of gesture, by which hands, eyes,

and even feet, could express rejection, as well as in her own broken French, she repelled the proposal of reimbursement, while she entreated that Gray would consider the money as his own property ; and at the same time forced upon him a ring set with brilliants, which seemed of considerable value. The father then spoke to her a few stern words, which she heard with an air of mingled agony and submission.

'I have given her a few minutes to see and weep over the miserable being which has been the seal of her dishonour,' said the stern father. 'Let us retire and leave her alone. You,' to the messenger, 'watch the door of the room on the outside.'

Gray, Lawford, and Monçada, retired to the parlour accordingly, where they waited in silence, each busied with his own reflections, till, within the space of half an hour, they received information that the lady was ready to depart.

'It is well,' replied Monçada ; 'I am glad she has yet sense enough left to submit to that which needs must be.'

So saying, he ascended the stair, and returned leading down his daughter, now again masked and veiled. As she passed Gray, she uttered the words—'My child, my child !' in a tone of unutterable anguish ; then entered the carriage, which was drawn up as close to the door of the doctor's house as the little enclosure would permit. The messenger, mounted on a led horse and accompanied by a servant and assistant, followed the carriage, which drove rapidly off, taking the road which leads to Edinburgh. All who had witnessed this strange scene now departed to make their conjectures, and some to count their gains ; for money had been distributed among the females who had attended on the lady, with so much liberality as considerably to reconcile them to the breach of the rights of womanhood inflicted by the precipitate removal of the patient.

CHAPTER II

THE last cloud of dust which the wheels of the carriage had raised was dissipated, when dinner, which claims a share of human thoughts even in the midst of the most

marvellous and affecting incidents, recurred to those of Mrs. Gray.

'Indeed, doctor, you will stand glowering out of the window till some other patient calls for you, and then have to set off without your dinner; and I hope Mr. Lawford will take pot-luck with us, for it is just his own hour; and indeed we had something rather better than ordinary for this poor lady—lamb and spinach, and a veal Florentine.'

The surgeon started as from a dream, and joined in his wife's hospitable request, to which Lawford willingly assented.

We will suppose the meal finished, a bottle of old and generous Antigua upon the table, and a modest little punch-bowl judiciously replenished for the accommodation of the doctor and his guest. Their conversation naturally turned on the strange scene which they had witnessed, and the town-clerk took considerable merit for his presence of mind.

'I am thinking, doctor,' said he, 'you might have brewed a bitter browst to yourself if I had not come in as I did.'

'Troth, and it might very well be so,' answered Gray; 'for, to tell you the truth, when I saw yonder fellow vapouring with his pistols among the women-folk in my own house, the old Cameronian spirit began to rise in me, and a little thing would have made me cleek to the poker.'

'Hoot, hoot! that would never have done. Na, na,' said the man of law, 'this was a case where a little prudence was worth all the pistols and pokers in the world.'

'And that was just what I thought when I sent to you, Clerk Lawford,' said the doctor.

'A wiser man he could not have called on to a difficult case,' added Mrs. Gray, as she sat with her work at a little distance from the table.

'Thanks t' ye, and here 's t' ye, my good neighbour,' answered the scribe; 'will you not let me help you to another glass of punch, Mrs. Gray?' This being declined, he proceeded. 'I am jalousing that the messenger and his warrant were just brought in to prevent any opposition. Ye saw how quietly he behaved after I had laid down the

law—I'll never believe the lady is in any risk from him. But the father is a dour chield; depend upon it, he has bred up the young filly on the curb-rein, and that has made the poor thing start off the course. I should not be surprised that he took her abroad, and shut her up in a convent.'

'Hardly,' replied Doctor Gray, 'if it be true, as I suspect, that both the father and daughter are of the Jewish persuasion.'

'A Jew!' said Mrs. Gray; 'and have I been taking a' this fyke about a Jew? I thought she seemed to gie a scunner at the eggs and bacon that Nurse Simson spoke about to her. But I thought Jews had ay had lang beards, and yon man's face is just like one of our ain folk's—I have seen the doctor with a langer beard himsell when he has not had leisure to shave.'

'That might have been Mr. Monçada's case,' said Lawford, 'for he seemed to have had a hard journey. But the Jews are often very respectable people, Mrs. Gray—they have no territorial property because the law is against them there, but they have a good hank in the money market—plenty of stock in the funds, Mrs. Gray, and, indeed, I think this poor young woman is better with her ain father, though he be a Jew and a dour chield into the bargain, than she would have been with the loon that wranged her, who is, by your account, Dr. Gray, baith a papist and a rebel. The Jews are well attached to government; they hate the Pope, the Devil, and the Pretender, as much as any honest man among ourselves.'

'I cannot admire either of the gentlemen,' said Gideon. 'But it is but fair to say that I saw Mr. Monçada when he was highly incensed, and to all appearance not without reason. Now this other man Tresham, if that be his name, was haughty to me, and I think something careless of the poor young woman, just at the time when he owed her most kindness, and me some thankfulness. I am, therefore, of your opinion, Clerk Lawford, that the Christian is the worse bargain of the two.'

'And you think of taking care of this wean yourself, doctor? That is what I call the good Samaritan.'

'At cheap cost, clerk; the child, if it lives, has enough

to bring it up decently, and set it out in life, and I can teach it an honourable and useful profession. It will be rather an amusement than a trouble to me, and I want to make some remarks on the childish diseases, which, with God's blessing, the child must come through under my charge ; and since Heaven has sent us no children '——

' Hoot, hoot ! ' said the town-clerk, ' you are in ower great a hurry now—you have na been sae lang married yet. Mrs. Gray, dinna let my daffing chase you away—we will be for a dish of tea belive, for the doctor and I are nae glass-breakers.'

Four years after this conversation took place, the event happened, at the possibility of which the town-clerk had hinted ; and Mrs. Gray presented her husband with an infant daughter. But good and evil are strangely mingled in this sublunary world. The fulfilment of his anxious longing for posterity was attended with the loss of his simple and kind-hearted wife ; one of the most heavy blows which fate could inflict on poor Gideon, and his house was made desolate even by the event which had promised for months before to add new comforts to its humble roof. Gray felt the shock as men of sense and firmness feel a decided blow, from the effects of which they never hope again fully to raise themselves. He discharged the duties of his profession with the same punctuality as ever, was easy, and even to appearance cheerful, in his intercourse with society ; but the sunshine of existence was gone. Every morning he missed the affectionate charges which recommended to him to pay attention to his own health while he was labouring to restore that blessing to his patients. Every evening, as he returned from his weary round, it was without the consciousness of a kind and affectionate reception from one eager to tell, and interested to hear, all the little events of the day. His whistle, which used to arise clear and strong as soon as Middlemas steeple was in view, was now for ever silenced, and the rider's head drooped, while the tired horse, lacking the stimulus of his master's hand and voice, seemed to shuffle along as if it experienced a share of his despondency. There were times when he was so much dejected as to be unable to endure even the presence of his little Menie, in whose

infant countenance he could trace the lineaments of the mother, of whose loss she had been the innocent and unconscious cause. 'Had it not been for this poor child'—he would think; but, instantly aware that the sentiment was sinful, he would snatch the infant to his breast, and load it with caresses—then hastily desire it to be removed from the parlour.

The Mohammedans have a fanciful idea that the true believer, in his passage to Paradise, is under the necessity of passing barefooted over a bridge composed of red-hot iron. But on this occasion, all the pieces of paper which the Moslem has preserved during his life, lest some holy thing being written upon them might be profaned, arrange themselves between his feet and the burning metal, and so save him from injury. In the same manner, the effects of kind and benevolent actions are sometimes found, even in this world, to assuage the pangs of subsequent afflictions.

Thus, the greatest consolation which poor Gideon could find after his heavy deprivation, was in the frolic fondness of Richard Middlemas, the child who was in so singular a manner thrown upon his charge. Even at this early age he was eminently handsome. When silent or out of humour, his dark eyes and striking countenance presented some recollections of the stern character imprinted on the features of his supposed father; but when he was gay and happy, which was much more frequently the case, these clouds were exchanged for the most frolicsome mirthful expression that ever dwelt on the laughing and thoughtless aspect of a child. He seemed to have a tact beyond his years in discovering and conforming to the peculiarities of human character. His nurse, one prime object of Richard's observance, was Nurse Jamieson, or, as she was more commonly called for brevity, and *par excellence*, Nurse. This was the person who had brought him up from infancy. She had lost her own child and, soon after, her husband, and being thus a lone woman, had, as used to be common in Scotland, remained a member of Dr. Gray's family. After the death of his wife, she gradually obtained the principal superintendence of the whole household; and being an honest and capable manager, was a person of very great importance in the family.

She was bold in her temper, violent in her feelings, and, as often happens with those in her condition, was as much attached to Richard Middlemas, whom she had once nursed at her bosom, as if he had been her own son. This affection the child repaid by all the tender attentions of which his age was capable.

Little Dick was also distinguished by the fondest and kindest attachment to his guardian and benefactor, Dr. Gray. He was officious in the right time and place, quiet as a lamb when his patron seemed inclined to study or to muse, active and assiduous to assist or divert him whenever it seemed to be wished, and, in choosing his opportunities, he seemed to display an address far beyond his childish years.

As time passed on, this pleasing character seemed to be still more refined. In everything like exercise or amusement, he was the pride and the leader of the boys of the place, over the most of whom his strength and activity gave him a decided superiority. At school his abilities were less distinguished, yet he was a favourite with the master, a sensible and useful teacher.

'Richard is not swift,' he used to say to his patron, Dr. Gray, 'but then he is sure; and it is impossible not to be pleased with a child who is so very desirous to give satisfaction.'

Young Middlemas's grateful affection to his patron seemed to increase with the expanding of his faculties, and found a natural and pleasing mode of displaying itself in his attentions to little Menie [1] Gray. Her slightest hint was Richard's law, and it was in vain that he was summoned forth by a hundred shrill voices to take the lead in hye-spye, or at football, if it was little Menie's pleasure that he should remain within, and build card-houses for her amusement. At other times he would take the charge of the little damsel entirely under his own care, and be seen wandering with her on the borough common, collecting wild flowers, or knitting caps made of bulrushes. Menie was attached to Dick Middlemas, in proportion to his affectionate assiduities; and the father saw with pleasure every new mark of attention to his child on the part of his protégé.

[1] Marion.

During the time that Richard was silently advancing from a beautiful child into a fine boy, and approaching from a fine boy to the time when he must be termed a handsome youth, Mr. Gray wrote twice a year with much regularity to Mr. Monçada, through the channel that gentleman had pointed out. The benevolent man thought that if the wealthy grandfather could only see his relative, of whom any family might be proud, he would be unable to persevere in his resolution of treating as an outcast one so nearly connected with him in blood, and so interesting in person and disposition. He thought it his duty, therefore, to keep open the slender and oblique communication with the boy's maternal grandfather, as that which might, at some future period, lead to a closer connexion. Yet the correspondence could not, in other respects, be agreeable to a man of spirit like Mr. Gray. His own letters were as short as possible, merely rendering an account of his ward's expenses, including a moderate board to himself, attested by Mr. Lawford, his co-trustee; and intimating Richard's state of health, and his progress in education, with a few words of brief but warm eulogy upon his goodness of head and heart. But the answers he received were still shorter. 'Mr. Monçada,' such was their usual tenor, 'acknowledges Mr. Gray's letter of such a date, notices the contents, and requests Mr. Gray to persist in the plan which he has hitherto prosecuted on the subject of their correspondence.' On occasions where extraordinary expenses seemed likely to be incurred, the remittances were made with readiness.

That day fortnight after Mrs. Gray's death, fifty pounds were received, with a note, intimating that it was designed to put the child R. M. into proper mourning. The writer had added two or three words, desiring that the surplus should be at Mr. Gray's disposal, to meet the additional expenses of this period of calamity; but Mr. Monçada had left the phrase unfinished, apparently in despair of turning it suitably into English. Gideon, without further investigation, quietly added the sum to the account of his ward's little fortune, contrary to the opinion of Mr. Lawford, who, aware that he was rather a loser than a gainer by the boy's residence in his house, was desirous that his friend

should not omit an opportunity of recovering some part of his expenses on that score. But Gray was proof against all remonstrance.

As the boy advanced towards his fourteenth year, Dr. Gray wrote a more elaborate account of his ward's character, acquirements, and capacity. He added that he did this for the purpose of enabling Mr. Monçada to judge how the young man's future education should be directed. Richard, he observed, was arrived at the point where education, losing its original and general character, branches off into different paths of knowledge, suitable to particular professions, and when it was therefore become necessary to determine which of them it was his pleasure that young Richard should be trained for ; and he would, on his part, do all he could to carry Mr. Monçada's wishes into execution, since the amiable qualities of the boy made him as dear to him, though but a guardian, as he could have been to his own father.

The answer, which arrived in the course of a week or ten days, was fuller than usual, and written in the first person. 'Mr. Gray,' such was the tenor, 'our meeting has been under such circumstances as could not make us favourably known to each other at the time. But I have the advantage of you, since, knowing your motives for entertaining an indifferent opinion of me, I could respect them and you at the same time ; whereas you, unable to comprehend the motives—I say, you, being unacquainted with the infamous treatment I had received, could not understand the reasons that I have for acting as I have done. Deprived, sir, by the act of a villain, of my child, and she despoiled of honour, I cannot bring myself to think of beholding the creature, however innocent, whose look must always remind me of hatred and of shame. Keep the poor child by you—educate him to your own profession, but take heed that he looks no higher than to fill such a situation in life as you yourself worthily occupy, or some other line of like importance. For the condition of a farmer, a country lawyer, a medical practitioner, or some such retired course of life, the means of outfit and education shall be amply supplied. But I must warn him and you, that any attempt to intrude himself on me further than I may especially

permit, will be attended with the total forfeiture of my favour and protection. So, having made known my mind to you, I expect you will act accordingly.'

The receipt of this letter determined Gideon to have some explanation with the boy himself, in order to learn if he had any choice among the professions thus opened to him; convinced at the same time, from his docility of temper, that he would refer the selection to his (Dr. Gray's) better judgement.

He had previously, however, the unpleasing task of acquainting Richard Middlemas with the mysterious circumstances attending his birth, of which he presumed him to be entirely ignorant, simply because he himself had never communicated them, but had let the boy consider himself as the orphan child of a distant relation. But though the doctor himself was silent, he might have remembered that Nurse Jamieson had the handsome enjoyment of her tongue, and was disposed to use it liberally.

From a very early period, Nurse Jamieson, amongst the variety of legendary lore which she instilled into her foster-son, had not forgotten what she called the awful season of his coming into the world—the personable appearance of his father, a grand gentleman, who looked as if the whole world lay at his feet—the beauty of his mother, and the terrible blackness of the mask which she wore, her een that glanced like diamonds, and the diamonds she wore on her fingers, that could be compared to nothing but her own een, the fairness of her skin, and the colour of her silk rokelay, with much proper stuff to the same purpose. Then she expatiated on the arrival of his grandfather, and the awful man, armed with pistol, dirk, and claymore (the last weapons existed only in nurse's imagination), the very ogre of a fairy tale—then all the circumstances of the carrying off his mother, while bank-notes were flying about the house like screeds of brown paper, and gold guineas were as plenty as chuckie-stanes. All this, partly to please and interest the boy, partly to indulge her own talent for amplification, nurse told with so many additional circumstances and gratuitous commentaries, that the real transaction, mysterious and odd as it certainly was, sank into

tameness before the nurse's edition, like humble prose contrasted with the boldest flights of poetry.

To hear all this did Richard seriously incline, and still more was he interested with the idea of his valiant father coming for him unexpectedly at the head of a gallant regiment, with music playing and colours flying, and carrying his son away on the most beautiful pony eyes ever beheld : or his mother, bright as the day, might suddenly appear in her coach-and-six, to reclaim her beloved child ; or his repentant grandfather, with his pockets stuffed out with bank-notes, would come to atone for his past cruelty, by heaping his neglected grandchild with unexpected wealth. Sure was Nurse Jamieson 'that it wanted but a blink of her bairn's bonny ee to turn their hearts, as Scripture sayeth ; and as strange things had been, as they should come a'thegither to the town at the same time, and make such a day as had never been seen in Middlemas ; and then her bairn would never be called by that Lowland name of Middlemas any more, which sounded as if it had been gathered out of the town gutter ; but would be called Galatian,[1] or Sir William Wallace, or Robin Hood, or after some other of the great princes named in story-books'.

Nurse Jamieson's history of the past, and prospects of the future, were too flattering not to excite the most ambitious visions in the mind of a boy, who naturally felt a strong desire of rising in the world, and was conscious of possessing the powers necessary to his advancement. The incidents of his birth resembled those he found commemorated in the tales which he read or listened to ; and there seemed no reason why his own adventures should not have a termination corresponding to those of such veracious histories. In a word, while good Doctor Gray imagined that his pupil was dwelling in utter ignorance of his origin, Richard was meditating upon nothing else than the time and means by which he anticipated his being extricated from the obscurity of his present condition, and enabled to assume the rank, to which, in his own opinion, he was entitled by birth.

So stood the feelings of the young man when, one day

[1] Galatian is a name of a person famous in Christmas gambols.

after dinner, the doctor snuffing the candle, and taking from his pouch the great leathern pocket-book in which he deposited particular papers, with a small supply of the most necessary and active medicines, he took from it Mr. Monçada's letter, and requested Richard Middlemas's serious attention, while he told him some circumstances concerning himself, which it greatly imported him to know. Richard's dark eyes flashed fire—the blood flushed his broad and well-formed forehead—the hour of explanation was at length come. He listened to the narrative of Gideon Gray, which, the reader may believe, being altogether divested of the gilding which Nurse Jamieson's imagination had bestowed upon it, and reduced to what mercantile men termed the *needful*, exhibited little more than the tale of a child of shame, deserted by its father and mother, and brought up on the reluctant charity of a more distant relation, who regarded him as the living though unconscious evidence of the disgrace of his family, and would more willingly have paid for the expenses of his funeral, than that of the food which was grudgingly provided for him. 'Temple and tower,' a hundred flattering edifices of Richard's childish imagination, went to the ground at once, and the pain which attended their demolition was rendered the more acute, by a sense of shame that he should have nursed such reveries. He remained while Gideon continued his explanation, in a dejected posture, his eyes fixed on the ground, and the veins of his forehead swollen with contending passions.

'And now, my dear Richard,' said the good surgeon, 'you must think what you can do for yourself, since your grandfather leaves you the choice of three honourable professions, by any of which, well and wisely prosecuted, you may become independent if not wealthy, and respectable if not great. You will naturally desire a little time for consideration.'

'Not a minute,' said the boy, raising his head, and looking boldly at his guardian. 'I am a free-born Englishman, and will return to England if I think fit.'

'A free-born fool you are,' said Gray; 'you were born, as I think, and no one can know better than I do, in the blue room of Stevenlaw's Land, in the Town-head

of Middlemas, if you call that being a free-born Englishman.'

'But Tom Hillary'—this was an apprentice of Clerk Lawford, who had of late been a great friend and adviser of young Middlemas—'Tom Hillary says that I am a free-born Englishman, notwithstanding, in right of my parents.'

'Pooh, child! what do we know of your parents? But what has your being an Englishman to do with the present question?'

'Oh, doctor!' answered the boy bitterly, 'you know we from the south side of Tweed cannot scramble so hard as you do. The Scots are too moral, and too prudent, and too robust, for a poor pudding-eater to live amongst them, whether as a parson, or as a lawyer, or as a doctor—with your pardon, sir.'

'Upon my life, Dick,' said Gray, 'this Tom Hillary will turn your brain. What is the meaning of all this trash?'

'Tom Hillary says that the parson lives by the sins of the people, the lawyer by their distresses, and the doctor by their diseases—always asking your pardon, sir.'

'Tom Hillary,' replied the doctor, 'should be drummed out of the borough. A whipper-snapper of an attorney's apprentice, run away from Newcastle! If I hear him talking so, I'll teach him to speak with more reverence of the learned professions. Let me hear no more of Tom Hillary whom you have seen far too much of lately. Think a little, like a lad of sense, and tell me what answer I am to give to Mr. Monçada.'

'Tell him,' said the boy, the tone of affected sarcasm laid aside, and that of injured pride substituted in its room, 'Tell him that my soul revolts at the obscure lot he recommends to me. I am determined to enter my father's profession, the army, unless my grandfather chooses to receive me into his house, and place me in his own line of business.'

'Yes, and make you his partner, I suppose, and acknowledge you for his heir?' said Dr. Gray; 'a thing extremely likely to happen, no doubt, considering the way in which he has brought you up all along, and the terms in which he now writes concerning you.'

'Then, sir, there is one thing which I can demand of you,' replied the boy. 'There is a large sum of money in

your hands belonging to me ; and since it is consigned to you for my use, I demand you should make the necessary advances to procure a commission in the army—account to me for the balance—and so, with thanks for past favours, I will give you no trouble in future.'

'Young man,' said the doctor gravely, 'I am very sorry to see that your usual prudence and good humour are not proof against the disappointment of some idle expectations which you had not the slightest reason to entertain. It is very true that there is a sum, which, in spite of various expenses, may still approach to a thousand pounds or better, which remains in my hands for your behoof. But I am bound to dispose of it according to the will of the donor ; and at any rate, you are not entitled to call for it until you come to years of discretion ; a period from which you are six years distant, according to law, and which, in one sense, you will never reach at all, unless you alter your present unreasonable crotchets. But come, Dick, this is the first time I have seen you in so absurd a humour, and you have many things, I own, in your situation to apologize for impatience even greater than you have displayed. But you should not turn your resentment on me, that am no way in fault. You should remember that I was your earliest and only friend, and took charge of you when every other person forsook you.'

'I do not thank you for it,' said Richard, giving way to a burst of uncontrolled passion. 'You might have done better for me had you pleased.'

'And in what manner, you ungrateful boy ? ' said Gray, whose composure was a little ruffled.

'You might have flung me under the wheels of their carriages as they drove off, and have let them trample on the body of their child, as they have done on his feelings.'

So saying, he rushed out of the room, and shut the door behind him with great violence, leaving his guardian astonished at his sudden and violent change of temper and manner.

'What the deuce can have possessed him ? Ah, well. High-spirited, and disappointed in some follies which that Tom Hillary has put into his head. But his is a case for anodynes, and shall be treated accordingly.'

While the doctor formed this good-natured resolution, young Middlemas rushed to Nurse Jamieson's apartment, where poor Menie, to whom his presence always gave holiday feelings, hastened to exhibit, for his admiration, a new doll, of which she had made the acquisition. No one, generally, was more interested in Menie's amusements than Richard; but at present Richard, like his celebrated namesake, was not i' the vein. He threw off the little damsel so carelessly, almost so rudely, that the doll flew out of Menie's hand, fell on the hearth-stone, and broke its waxen face. The rudeness drew from Nurse Jamieson a rebuke, even although the culprit was her darling.

'Hout awa', Richard—that wasna like yoursell, to guide Miss Menie that gate. Haud your tongue, Miss Menie, and I'll soon mend the baby's face.'

But if Menie cried, she did not cry for the doll; and while the tears flowed silently down her cheeks, she sat looking at Dick Middlemas with a childish face of fear, sorrow, and wonder. Nurse Jamieson was soon diverted from her attention to Menie Gray's distresses, especially as she did not weep aloud, and her attention became fixed on the altered countenance, red eyes, and swollen features of her darling foster-child. She instantly commenced an investigation into the cause of his distress, after the usual inquisitorial manner of matrons of her class. 'What is the matter wi' my bairn?' and 'Wha has been vexing my bairn?' with similar questions, at last extorted this reply:

'I am not your bairn—I am no one's bairn—no one's son. I am an outcast from my family, and belong to no one. Dr. Gray has told me so himself.'

'And did he cast up to my bairn that he was a bastard?—troth he was na blate—my certie, your father was a better man than ever stood on the doctor's shanks—a handsome grand gentleman, with an ee like a gled's, and a step like a Highland piper.'

Nurse Jamieson had got on a favourite topic, and would have expatiated long enough, for she was a professed admirer of masculine beauty, but there was something which displeased the boy in her last simile; so he cut the conversation short, by asking whether she knew exactly

how much money his grandfather had left with Dr. Gray for his maintenance. 'She could not say—didna ken—an awfu' sum it was to pass out of ae man's hand. She was sure it wasna less than ae hundred pounds, and it might weel be twa.' In short, she knew nothing about the matter; 'but she was sure Dr. Gray would count to him to the last farthing; for everybody kend that he was a just man where siller was concerned. However, if her bairn wanted to ken mair about it, to be sure the town-clerk could tell him all about it.'

Richard Middlemas arose and left the apartment without saying more. He went immediately to visit the old town-clerk, to whom he had made himself acceptable, as, indeed, he had done to most of the dignitaries about the burgh. He introduced the conversation by the proposal which had been made to him for choosing a profession, and, after speaking of the mysterious circumstances of his birth, and the doubtful prospects which lay before him, he easily led the town-clerk into conversation as to the amount of the funds, and heard the exact state of the money in his guardian's hands, which corresponded with the information he had already received. He next sounded the worthy scribe on the possibility of his going into the army; but received a second confirmation of the intelligence Mr. Gray had given him; being informed that no part of the money could be placed at his disposal till he was of age; and then not without the especial consent of both his guardians, and particularly that of his master. He therefore took leave of the town-clerk, who, much approving the cautious manner in which he spoke, and his prudent selection of an adviser at this important crisis of his life, intimated to him, that should he choose the law, he would himself receive him into his office, upon a very moderate apprentice-fee; and would part with Tom Hillary to make room for him, as the lad was 'rather pragmatical, and plagued him with speaking about his English practice, which they had nothing to do with on this side of the Border—the Lord be thanked!'

Middlemas thanked him for his kindness, and promised to consider his kind offer, in case he should determine upon following the profession of the law.

From Tom Hillary's master, Richard went to Tom Hillary himself, who chanced then to be in the office. He was a lad about twenty, as smart as small, but distinguished for the accuracy with which he dressed his hair, and the splendour of a laced hat and embroidered waistcoat with which he graced the church of Middlemas on Sundays. Tom Hillary had been bred an attorney's clerk in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but, for some reason or other, had found it more convenient of late years to reside in Scotland, and was recommended to the town-clerk of Middlemas by the accuracy and beauty with which he transcribed the records of the burgh. It is not improbable that the reports concerning the singular circumstances of Richard Middlemas's birth, and the knowledge that he was actually possessed of a considerable sum of money, induced Hillary, though so much his senior, to admit the lad to his company, and enrich his youthful mind with some branches of information, which in that retired corner, his pupil might otherwise have been some time in attaining. Amongst these were certain games at cards and dice, in which the pupil paid, as was reasonable, the price of his initiation by his losses to his instructor. After a long walk with this youngster, whose advice, like the unwise son of the wisest of men, he probably valued more than that of his more aged counsellors, Richard Middlemas returned to his lodgings in Stevenlaw's Land, and went to bed sad and supperless.

The next morning Richard arose with the sun, and his night's rest appeared to have had its frequent effect, in cooling the passions and correcting the understanding. Little Menie was the first person to whom he made the *amende honorable*; and a much smaller propitiation than the new doll with which he presented her would have been accepted as an atonement for a much greater offence. Menie was one of those pure spirits, to whom a state of unkindness, if the estranged person has been a friend, is a state of pain, and the slightest advance of her friend and protector was sufficient to regain all her childish confidence and affection.

The father did not prove more inexorable than Menie had done. Mr. Gray, indeed, thought he had good reason to look cold upon Richard at their next meeting, being not

a little hurt at the ungrateful treatment which he had received on the preceding evening. But Middlemas disarmed him at once, by frankly pleading that he had suffered his mind to be carried away by the supposed rank and importance of his parents, into an idle conviction that he was one day to share them. The letter of his grandfather, which condemned him to banishment and obscurity for life, was, he acknowledged, a very severe blow ; and it was with deep sorrow that he reflected that the irritation of his disappointment had led him to express himself in a manner far short of the respect and reverence of one who owed Mr. Gray the duty and affection of a son, and ought to refer to his decision every action of his life. Gideon, propitiated by an admission so candid and made with so much humility, readily dismissed his resentment, and kindly inquired of Richard whether he had bestowed any reflection upon the choice of profession which had been subjected to him ; offering, at the same time, to allow him all reasonable time to make up his mind.

On this subject, Richard Middlemas answered with the same promptitude and candour. 'He had,' he said, 'in order to forming his opinion more safely, consulted with his friend, the town-clerk.' The doctor nodded approbation. 'Mr. Lawford had, indeed, been most friendly, and had even offered to take him into his own office. But if his father and benefactor would permit him to study, under his instructions, the noble art in which he himself enjoyed such a deserved reputation, the mere hope that he might by and by be of some use to Mr. Gray in his business would greatly overbalance every other consideration. Such a course of education, and such a use of professional knowledge when he had acquired it, would be a greater spur to his industry than the prospect even of becoming town-clerk of Middlemas in his proper person.'

As the young man expressed it to be his firm and unalterable choice to study medicine under his guardian and to remain a member of his family, Dr. Gray informed Mr. Monçada of the lad's determination ; who, to testify his approbation, remitted to the doctor the sum of £100 as apprentice fee, a sum nearly three times as much as Gray's modesty had hinted at as necessary.

Shortly after, when Dr. Gray and the town-clerk met at the small club of the burgh, their joint theme was the sense and steadiness of Richard Middlemas.

'Indeed,' said the town-clerk, 'he is such a friendly and disinterested boy, that I could not get him to accept a place in my office, for fear he should be thought to be pushing himself forward at the expense of Tam Hillary.'

'And, indeed, clerk,' said Gray, 'I have sometimes been afraid that he kept too much company with that Tam Hillary of yours; but twenty Tam Hillarys would not corrupt Dick Middlemas.'

CHAPTER III

Dick was come to high renown
Since he commenced physician;
Tom was held by all the town
The better politician.

Tom and Dick.

At the same period when Dr. Gray took under his charge his youthful lodger Richard Middlemas, he received proposals from the friends of one Adam Hartley, to receive him also as an apprentice. The lad was the son of a respectable farmer on the English side of the Border who, educating his eldest son to his own occupation, desired to make his second a medical man, in order to avail himself of the friendship of a great man, his landlord, who had offered to assist his views in life, and represented a doctor or surgeon as the sort of person to whose advantage his interest could be most readily applied. Middlemas and Hartley were therefore associated in their studies. In winter they were boarded in Edinburgh, for attending the medical classes which were necessary for taking their degree. Three or four years thus passed on, and, from being mere boys, the two medical aspirants shot up into young men, who, being both very good-looking, well dressed, well bred, and having money in their pockets, became personages of some importance in the little town of Middlemas, where there was scarce anything that could be termed an aristocracy, and in which beaux were scarce and belles were plenty.

Each of the two had his especial partisans; for though the young men themselves lived in tolerable harmony together, yet, as usual in such cases, no one could approve of one of them, without at the same time comparing him with, and asserting his superiority over, his companion.

Both were gay, fond of dancing, and sedulous attendants on the *practeezings*, as he called them, of Mr. M'Fittoch, a dancing-master, who, itinerant during the summer, became stationary in the winter season, and afforded the youth of Middlemas the benefit of his instructions at the rate of twenty lessons for five shillings sterling. On these occasions, each of Dr. Gray's pupils had his appropriate praise. Hartley danced with most spirit—Middlemas with a better grace. Mr. M'Fittoch would have turned out Richard against the countryside in the minuet, and wagered the thing dearest to him in the world (and that was his kit) upon his assured superiority; but he admitted Hartley was superior to him in hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels.

In dress, Hartley was most expensive, perhaps because his father afforded him better means of being so; but his clothes were neither so tasteful when new, nor so well preserved when they began to grow old, as those of Richard Middlemas. Adam Hartley was sometimes fine, at other times rather slovenly, and on the former occasions looked rather too conscious of his splendour. His chum was at all times regularly neat and well dressed; while at the same time he had an air of good breeding, which made him appear always at ease; so that his dress, whatever it was, seemed to be just what he ought to have worn at the time.

In their persons there was a still more strongly marked distinction. Adam Hartley was full middle size, stout, and well limbed; and an open English countenance, of the genuine Saxon mould, showed itself among chestnut locks until the hairdresser destroyed them. He loved the rough exercises of wrestling, boxing, leaping, and quarterstaff, and frequented, when he could obtain leisure, the bull-baitings and football matches by which the burgh was sometimes enlivened.

Richard, on the contrary, was dark, like his father and

mother, with high features, beautifully formed, but exhibiting something of a foreign character; and his person was tall and slim, though muscular and active. His address and manners must have been natural to him, for they were, in elegance and ease, far beyond any example which he could have found in his native burgh. He learned the use of the small-sword while in Edinburgh, and took lessons from a performer at the theatre, with the purpose of refining his mode of speaking. He became also an amateur of the drama, regularly attending the playhouse, and assuming the tone of a critic in that and other lighter departments of literature. To fill up the contrast, so far as taste was concerned, Richard was a dexterous and successful angler—Adam, a bold and unerring shot. Their efforts to surpass each other in supplying Dr. Gray's table, rendered his housekeeping much preferable to what it had been on former occasions; and, besides, small presents of fish and game are always agreeable amongst the inhabitants of a country town, and contributed to increase the popularity of the young sportsmen.

While the burgh was divided, for lack of better subject of disputation, concerning the comparative merits of Dr. Gray's two apprentices, he himself was sometimes chosen the referee. But in this, as on other matters, the doctor was cautious. He said the lads were both good lads, and would be useful men in the profession if their heads were not carried with the notice which the foolish people of the burgh took of them, and the parties of pleasure that were so often taking them away from their business. No doubt it was natural for him to feel more confidence in Hartley, who came of ken'd folk, and was very near as good as a born Scotsman. But if he did feel such a partiality, he blamed himself for it, since the stranger child, so oddly cast upon his hands, had peculiar good right to such patronage and affection as he had to bestow; and truly the young man himself seemed so grateful, that it was impossible for him to hint the slightest wish that Dick Middlemas did not hasten to execute.

There were persons in the burgh of Middlemas who were indiscreet enough to suppose that Miss Menie must be a better judge than any other person of the comparative

merits of these accomplished personages, respecting which the public opinion was generally divided. No one even of her greatest intimates ventured to put the question to her in precise terms ; but her conduct was narrowly observed, and the critics remarked, that to Adam Hartley her attentions were given more freely and frankly. She laughed with him, chatted with him, and danced with him ; while to Dick Middlemas her conduct was more shy and distant. The premises seemed certain, but the public were divided in the conclusions which were to be drawn from them.

It was not possible for the young men to be the subject of such discussions without being sensible that they existed ; and thus, contrasted together by the little society in which they moved, they must have been made of better than ordinary clay if they had not themselves entered by degrees into the spirit of the controversy, and considered themselves as rivals for public applause.

Nor is it to be forgotten that Menie Gray was by this time shot up into one of the prettiest young women, not of Middlemas only, but of the whole county in which the little burgh is situated. This, indeed, had been settled by evidence which could not be esteemed short of decisive. At the time of the races there were usually assembled in the burgh some company of the higher classes from the country around, and many of the sober burghers mended their incomes, by letting their apartments or taking in lodgers of quality for the busy week. All the rural thanes and thanesses attended on these occasions ; and such was the number of cocked hats and silken trains, that the little town seemed for a time totally to have changed its inhabitants. On this occasion persons of a certain quality only were permitted to attend upon the nightly balls which were given in the old townhouse, and the line of distinction excluded Mr. Gray's family.

The aristocracy, however, used their privileges with some feelings of deference to the native beaux and belles of the burgh who were thus doomed to hear the fiddles nightly without being permitted to dance to them. One evening in the race-week, termed the Hunter's Ball, was dedicated to general amusement, and liberated from the usual restrictions of etiquette. On this occasion all the respectable

families in the town were invited to share the amusement of the evening, and to wonder at the finery, and be grateful for the condescension, of their betters. This was especially the case with the females, for the number of invitations to the gentlemen of the town was much more limited. Now at this general muster, the beauty of Miss Gray's face and person had placed her, in the opinion of all competent judges, decidedly at the head of all the belles present, saving those with whom, according to the ideas of the place, it would hardly have been decent to compare her.

The laird of the ancient and distinguished house of Louponheight did not hesitate to engage her hand during the greater part of the evening ; and his mother, renowned for her stern assertion of the distinctions of rank, placed the little plebeian beside her at supper, and was heard to say that the surgeon's daughter behaved very prettily indeed, and seemed to know perfectly well where and what she was. As for the young laird himself, he capered so high, and laughed so uproariously, as to give rise to a rumour that he was minded to ' shoot madly from his sphere ', and to convert the village doctor's daughter into a lady of his own ancient name.

During this memorable evening, Middlemas and Hartley, who had found room in the music gallery, witnessed the scene, and, as it would seem, with very different feelings. Hartley was evidently annoyed by the excess of attention which the gallant Laird of Louponheight, stimulated by the influence of a couple of bottles of claret, and by the presence of a partner who danced remarkably well, paid to Miss Menie Gray. He saw from his lofty stand all the dumb show of gallantry, with the comfortable feelings of a famishing creature looking upon a feast which he is not permitted to share, and regarded every extraordinary frisk of the jovial laird as the same might have been looked upon by a gouty person who apprehended that the dignitary was about to descend on his toes. At length, unable to restrain his emotion, he left the gallery and returned no more.

Far different was the demeanour of Middlemas. He seemed gratified and elevated by the attention which was generally paid to Miss Gray, and by the admiration she excited. On the valiant Laird of Louponheight he looked

with indescribable contempt, and amused himself with pointing out to the burgh dancing-master, who acted *pro tempore* as one of the band, the frolicsome bounds and pirouettes in which that worthy displayed a great deal more of vigour than of grace.

'But ye shouldna laugh sae loud, Master Dick,' said the master of capers; 'he hasna had the advantage of a real gracefu' teacher, as ye have had; and troth, if he listed to tak some lessons, I think I could make some hand of his feet, for he is a souple chield, and has a gallant instep of his ain; and sic a laced hat hasna been seen on the causeway of Middlemas this mony a day. Ye are standing laughing there, Dick Middlemas; I would have you be sure he does not cut you out with your bonny partner yonder.'

'He be ——!' Middlemas was beginning a sentence which could not have concluded with strict attention to propriety, when the master of the band summoned M'Fittoch to his post, by the following ireful expostulation:—'What are ye about, sir? Mind your bow-hand. How the deil d'ye think three fiddles is to keep down a bass, if yin o' them stands girning and gabbling as ye're doing? Play up, sir!'

Dick Middlemas, thus reduced to silence, continued, from his lofty station, like one of the gods of the Epicureans, to survey what passed below, without the gaieties which he witnessed being able to excite more than a smile, which seemed, however, rather to indicate a good-humoured contempt for what was passing than a benevolent sympathy with the pleasures of others.

CHAPTER IV

Now hold thy tongue, Billy Bewick, he said,
Of peaceful talking let me be;
But if thou art a man, as I think thou art,
Come ower the dike and fight with me.
Border Minstrelsy.

On the morning after this gay evening, the two young men were labouring together in a plot of ground behind

Stevenlaw's Land, which the doctor had converted into a garden, where he raised, with a view to pharmacy as well as botany, some rare plants, which obtained the place from the vulgar the sounding name of the Physic Garden.[1] Mr. Gray's pupils readily complied with his wishes that they would take some care of this favourite spot, to which both contributed their labours, after which Hartley used to devote himself to the cultivation of the kitchen garden, which he had raised into this respectability from a spot not excelling a common kail-yard, while Richard Middlemas did his utmost to decorate with flowers and shrubs a sort of arbour, usually called Miss Menie's bower.

At present they were both in the botanic patch of the garden, when Dick Middlemas asked Hartley why he had left the ball so soon the evening before ?

'I should rather ask you,' said Hartley, 'what pleasure you felt in staying there ? I tell you, Dick, it is a shabby low place this Middlemas of ours. In the smallest burgh in England, every decent freeholder would have been asked if the Member gave a ball.'

'What, Hartley !' said his companion, 'are you, of all men, a candidate for the honour of mixing with the first-born of the earth ? Mercy on us ! How will canny Northumberland (throwing a true northern accent on the letter R) acquit himself ? Methinks I see thee in thy pea-green suit, dancing a jig with the honourable Miss Maddie MacFudgeon, while chiefs and thanes around laugh as they would do at a hog in armour !'

'You don't, or perhaps you won't, understand me,' said Hartley. 'I am not such a fool as to desire to be hail-fellow-well-met with these fine folks—I care as little for them as they do for me. But as they do not choose to ask us to dance, I don't see what business they have with our partners.'

'Partners, said you !' answered Middlemas ; 'I don't think Menie is very often yours.'

'As often as I ask her,' answered Hartley rather haughtily.

'Aye ? Indeed ? I did not think that. And hang me, if I think so yet,' said Middlemas, with the same sarcastic tone. 'I tell thee, Adam, I will bet you a bowl of punch

[1] The Botanic Garden is so termed by the vulgar of Edinburgh (1827).

that Miss Gray will not dance with you the next time you ask her. All I stipulate is to know the day.'

'I will lay no bets about Miss Gray,' said Hartley; 'her father is my master, and I am obliged to him—I think I should act very scurvily if I were to make her the subject of any idle debate betwixt you and me.'

'Very right,' replied Middlemas; 'you should finish one quarrel before you begin another. Pray, saddle your pony, ride up to the gate of Louponheight Castle, and defy the baron to mortal combat for having presumed to touch the fair hand of Menie Gray.'

'I wish you would leave Miss Gray's name out of the question, and take your defiances to your fine folks in your own name, and see what they will say to the surgeon's apprentice.'

'Speak for yourself, if you please, Mr. Adam Hartley. I was not born a clown like some folks, and should care little, if I saw it fit, to talk to the best of them at the ordinary, and make myself understood too.'

'Very likely,' answered Hartley, losing patience: 'you are one of themselves, you know—Middlemas of that Ilk.'

'You scoundrel!' said Richard, advancing on him in fury, his taunting humour entirely changed into rage.

'Stand back,' said Hartley, 'or you will come by the worst; if you will break rude jests, you must put up with rough answers.'

'I will have satisfaction for this insult, by Heaven!'

'Why, so you shall, if you insist on it,' said Hartley; 'but better, I think, to say no more about the matter. We have both spoken what would have been better left unsaid. I was in the wrong to say what I said to you, although you did provoke me. And now I have given you as much satisfaction as a reasonable man can ask.'

'Sir,' repeated Middlemas, 'the satisfaction which I demand is that of a gentleman—the doctor has a pair of pistols.'

'And a pair of mortars also, which are heartily at your service, gentlemen,' said Mr. Gray, coming forward from behind a yew-hedge, where he had listened to the whole or greater part of this dispute. 'A fine story it would be of my apprentices shooting each other with my own pistols!

Let me see either of you fit to treat a gunshot wound, before you think of inflicting one. Go, you are both very foolish boys, and I cannot take it kind of either of you to bring the name of my daughter into such disputes as these. Hark ye, lads, ye both owe me, I think, some portion of respect, and even of gratitude—it will be a poor return, if instead of living quietly with this poor motherless girl, like brothers with a sister, you should oblige me to increase my expense and abridge my comfort, by sending my child from me for the few months that you are to remain here. Let me see you shake hands, and let us have no more of this nonsense.'

While their master spoke in this manner, both the young men stood before him in the attitude of self-convicted criminals. At the conclusion of his rebuke, Hartley turned frankly round, and offered his hand to his companion, who accepted it, but after a moment's hesitation. There was nothing further passed on the subject, but the lads never resumed the same sort of intimacy which had existed betwixt them in their earlier acquaintance. On the contrary, avoiding every connexion not absolutely required by their situation, and abridging as much as possible even their indispensable intercourse in professional matters, they seemed as much estranged from each other as two persons residing in the same small house had the means of being.

As for Menie Gray, her father did not appear to entertain the least anxiety upon her account, although from his frequent and almost daily absence from home, she was exposed to constant intercourse with two handsome young men, both, it might be supposed, ambitious of pleasing her more than most parents would have deemed entirely prudent. Nor was Nurse Jamieson—her menial situation, and her excessive partiality for her foster-son, considered—altogether such a matron as could afford her protection. Gideon, however, knew that his daughter possessed, in its fullest extent, the upright and pure integrity of his own character, and that never father had less reason to apprehend that a daughter should deceive his confidence; and justly secure of her principles, he overlooked the danger to which he exposed her feelings and affections.

The intercourse betwixt Menie and the young men

seemed now of a guarded kind on all sides. Their meeting was only at meals, and Miss Gray was at pains, perhaps by her father's recommendation, to treat them with the same degree of attention. This, however, was no easy matter; for Hartley became so retiring, cold, and formal, that it was impossible for her to sustain any prolonged intercourse with him; whereas Middlemas, perfectly at his ease, sustained his part as formerly upon all occasions that occurred, and without appearing to press his intimacy assiduously, seemed nevertheless to retain the complete possession of it.

The time drew nigh at length when the young men, freed from the engagements of their indentures, must look to play their own independent part in the world. Mr. Gray informed Richard Middlemas that he had written pressingly upon the subject to Monçada, and that more than once, but had not yet received an answer; nor did he presume to offer his own advice, until the pleasure of his grandfather should be known. Richard seemed to endure this suspense with more patience than the doctor thought belonged naturally to his character. He asked no questions—stated no conjectures—showed no anxiety, but seemed to await with patience the turn which events should take. 'My young gentleman,' thought Mr. Gray, 'has either fixed on some course in his own mind, or he is about to be more tractable than some points of his character have led me to expect.'

In fact, Richard had made an experiment on this inflexible relative, by sending Mr. Monçada a letter full of duty and affection, and gratitude, desiring to be permitted to correspond with him in person, and promising to be guided in every particular by his will. The answer to this appeal was his own letter returned, with a note from the bankers whose cover had been used, saying that any future attempt to intrude on Mr. Monçada would put a final period to their remittances.

While things were in this situation in Stevenlaw's Land, Adam Hartley one evening, contrary to his custom for several months, sought a private interview with his fellow-apprentice. He found him in the little arbour, and could not omit observing that Dick Middlemas, on his appearance,

shoved into his bosom a small packet, as if afraid of its being seen, and snatching up a hoe, began to work with great devotion, like one who wished to have it thought that his whole soul was in his occupation.

'I wished to speak with you, Mr. Middlemas,' said Hartley; 'but I fear I interrupt you.'

'Not in the least,' said the other, laying down his hoe; 'I was only scratching up the weeds which the late showers have made rush up so numerously. I am at your service.'

Hartley proceeded to the arbour, and seated himself. Richard imitated his example, and seemed to wait for the proposed communication.

'I have had an interesting communication with Mr. Gray,' said Hartley, and there stopped, like one who finds himself entering upon a difficult task.

'I hope the explanation has been satisfactory?' said Middlemas.

'You shall judge. Doctor Gray was pleased to say something to me very civil about my proficiency in the duties of our profession; and, to my great astonishment, asked me whether, as he was now becoming old, I had any particular objection to continue in my present situation, but with some pecuniary advantages, for two years longer; at the end of which he promised to me that I should enter into partnership with him.'

'Mr. Gray is an undoubted judge,' said Middlemas, 'what person will best suit him as a professional assistant. The business may be worth £200 a year, and an active assistant might go nigh to double it, by riding Strath-Devan and the Carse. No great subject for division after all, Mr. Hartley.'

'But,' continued Hartley, 'that is not all. The doctor says—he proposes—in short, if I can render myself agreeable, in the course of these two years, to Miss Menie Gray, he proposes, that when they terminate, I should become his son as well as his partner.'

As he spoke, he kept his eye fixed on Richard's face, which was for a moment strongly agitated; but instantly recovering, he answered, in a tone where pique and offended pride vainly endeavoured to disguise themselves under an affectation of indifference, 'Well, Master Adam, I cannot

but wish you joy of the patriarchal arrangement. You have served five years for a professional diploma—a sort of Leah, that privilege of killing and curing. Now you begin a new course of servitude for a lovely Rachel. Undoubtedly—perhaps it is rude in me to ask—but undoubtedly you have accepted so flattering an arrangement ? '

' You cannot but recollect there was a condition annexed,' said Hartley gravely.

' That of rendering yourself acceptable to a girl you have known for so many years ? ' said Middlemas with a half-suppressed sneer. ' No great difficulty in that, I should think, for such a person as Mr. Hartley, with Doctor Gray's favour to back him. No, no—there could be no great obstacle there.'

' Both you and I know the contrary, Mr. Middlemas,' said Hartley very seriously.

' I know ? How should I know anything more than yourself about the state of Miss Gray's inclinations ? ' said Middlemas. ' I am sure we have had equal access to know them.'

' Perhaps so ; but some know better how to avail themselves of opportunities. Mr. Middlemas, I have long suspected that you have had the inestimable advantage of possessing Miss Gray's affections, and '——

' I ? ' interrupted Middlemas ; ' you are jesting, or you are jealous. You do yourself less, and me more, than justice ; but the compliment is so great, that I am obliged to you for the mistake.'

' That you may know,' answered Hartley, ' I do not speak either by guess, or from what you call jealousy, I tell you frankly that Menie Gray herself told me the state of her affections. I naturally communicated to her the discourse I had with her father. I told her I was but too well convinced that at the present moment I did not possess that interest in her heart, which alone might entitle me to request her acquiescence in the views which her father's goodness held out to me ; but I entreated her not at once to decide against me, but give me an opportunity to make way in her affections, if possible, trusting that time, and the services which I should render to her father, might have an ultimate effect in my favour.'

'A most natural and modest request. But what did the young lady say in reply?'

'She is a noble-hearted girl, Richard Middlemas; and for her frankness alone, even without her beauty and her good sense, deserves an emperor. I cannot express the graceful modesty with which she told me that she knew too well the kindliness, as she was pleased to call it, of my heart, to expose me to the protracted pain of an unrequited passion. She candidly informed me that she had been long engaged to you in secret—that you had exchanged portraits; and though without her father's consent she would never become yours, yet she felt it impossible that she should ever so far change her sentiments as to afford the most distant prospect of success to another.'

'Upon my word,' said Middlemas, 'she has been extremely candid indeed, and I am very much obliged to her!'

'And upon *my* honest word, Mr. Middlemas,' returned Hartley, 'you do Miss Gray the greatest injustice—nay, you are ungrateful to her, if you are displeased at her making this declaration. She loves you as a woman loves the first object of her affection—she loves you better'—He stopped, and Middlemas completed the sentence.

'Better than I deserve, perhaps? Faith, it may well be so, and I love her dearly in return. But after all, you know, the secret was mine as well as hers, and it would have been better that she had consulted me before making it public.'

'Mr. Middlemas,' said Hartley earnestly, 'if the least of this feeling, on your part, arises from the apprehension that your secret is less safe because it is in my keeping, I can assure you that such is my grateful sense of Miss Gray's goodness in communicating, to save me pain, an affair of such delicacy to herself and you, that wild horses should tear me limb from limb before they forced a word of it from my lips.'

'Nay, nay, my dear friend,' said Middlemas, with a frankness of manner indicating a cordiality that had not existed between them for some time, 'you must allow me to be a little jealous in my turn. Your true lover cannot have a title to the name, unless he be sometimes unreasonable; and somehow, it seems odd she should have chosen for a confidant one whom I have often thought a formidable

rival ; and yet I am so far from being displeased, that I do not know that the dear sensible girl could after all have made a better choice. It is time that the foolish coldness between us should be ended, as you must be sensible that its real cause lay in our rivalry. I have much need of good advice, and who can give it to me better than the old companion, whose soundness of judgement I have always envied, even when some injudicious friends have given me credit for quicker parts ? '

Hartley accepted Richard's proffered hand, but without any of the buoyancy of spirit with which it was offered.

' I do not intend,' he said, ' to remain many days in this place, perhaps not very many hours. But if, in the meanwhile, I can benefit you, by advice or otherwise, you may fully command me. It is the only mode in which I can be of service to Menie Gray.'

' Love my mistress, love me ; a happy *pendant* to the old proverb, Love me, love my dog. Well, then, for Menie Gray's sake, if not for Dick Middlemas's (plague on that vulgar tell-tale name), will you, that are a stander-by, tell us, who are the unlucky players, what you think of this game of ours ? '

' How can you ask such a question, when the field lies so fair before you ? I am sure that Dr. Gray would retain you as his assistant upon the same terms which he proposed to me. You are the better match, in all worldly respects, for his daughter, having some capital to begin the world with.'

' All true—but methinks Mr. Gray has showed no great predilection for me in this matter.'

' If he has done injustice to your indisputable merit,' said Hartley dryly, ' the preference of his daughter has more than atoned for it.'

' Unquestionably ; and dearly, therefore, do I love her ; otherwise, Adam, I am not a person to grasp at the leavings of other people.'

' Richard,' replied Hartley, ' that pride of yours, if you do not check it, will render you both ungrateful and miserable. Mr. Gray's ideas are most friendly. He told me plainly that his choice of me as an assistant, and as a member of his family, had been a long time balanced by his early

affection for you, until he thought he had remarked in you a decisive discontent with such limited prospects as his offer contained, and a desire to go abroad into the world and push, as it is called, your fortune. He said that although it was very probable that you might love his daughter well enough to relinquish these ambitious ideas for her sake, yet the demons of Ambition and Avarice would return after the exorciser Love had exhausted the force of his spells, and then he thought he would have just reason to be anxious for his daughter's happiness.'

'By my faith, the worthy senior speaks scholarly and wisely,' answered Richard—'I did not think he had been so clear-sighted. To say the truth, but for the beautiful Menie Gray, I should feel like a mill-horse, walking my daily round in this dull country, while other gay rovers are trying how the world will receive them. For instance, where do you yourself go?'

'A cousin of my mother's commands a ship in the Company's service. I intend to go with him as surgeon's mate. If I like the sea-service, I will continue in it; if not, I will enter some other line.' This Hartley said with a sigh.

'To India!' answered Richard. 'Happy dog—to India! You may well bear with equanimity all disappointments sustained on this side of the globe. Oh, Delhi! oh, Golconda! have your names no power to conjure down idle recollections? India, where gold is won by steel; where a brave man cannot pitch his desire of fame and wealth so high but that he may realize it if he have fortune to his friend? Is it possible that the bold adventurer can fix his thoughts on you, and still be dejected at the thought that a bonny blue-eyed lass looked favourably on a less lucky fellow than himself? Can this be?'

'Less lucky?' said Hartley. 'Can you, the accepted lover of Menie Gray, speak in that tone, even though it be in jest!'

'Nay, Adam,' said Richard, 'don't be angry with me, because, being thus far successful, I rate my good fortune not quite so rapturously as perhaps you do who have missed the luck of it. Your philosophy should tell you that the object which we attain or are sure of attaining, loses, perhaps, even by that very certainty, a little of the extrava-

gant and ideal value which attached to it while the object of feverish hopes and aguish fears. But for all that, I cannot live without my sweet Menie. I would wed her to-morrow, with all my soul, without thinking a minute on the clog which so early a marriage would fasten on our heels. But to spend two additional years in this infernal wilderness, cruising after crowns and half-crowns, when worse men are making lacs and crores of rupees—it is a sad falling off, Adam. Counsel me, my friend—can you not suggest some mode of getting off from these two years of destined dullness ?'

'Not I,' replied Hartley, scarce repressing his displeasure ; 'and if I could induce Dr. Gray to dispense with so reasonable a condition, I should be very sorry to do so. You are but twenty-one, and if such a period of probation was, in the doctor's prudence, judged necessary for me, who am full two years older, I have no idea that he will dispense with it in yours.'

'Perhaps not,' replied Middlemas ; 'but do you not think that these two, or call them three, years of probation, had better be spent in India where much may be done in a little while, than here where nothing can be done save just enough to get salt to our broth, or broth to our salt ? Methinks I have a natural turn for India, and so I ought. My father was a soldier by the conjecture of all who saw him, and gave me a love of the sword and an arm to use one. My mother's father was a rich trafficker, who loved wealth, I warrant me, and knew how to get it. This petty two hundred a year, with its miserable and precarious possibilities to be shared with the old gentleman, sounds in the ears of one like me, who have the world for the winning and a sword to cut my way through it, like something little better than a decent kind of beggary. Menie is in herself a gem—a diamond—I admit it. But then, one would not set such a precious jewel in lead or copper, but in pure gold ; aye, and add a circlet of brilliants to set it off with. Be a good fellow, Adam, and undertake the setting my project in proper colours before the doctor. I am sure, the wisest thing for him and Menie both, is to permit me to spend this short time of probation in the land of cowries. I am sure my heart will be there at any rate, and while I am bleeding

some bumpkin for an inflammation, I shall be in fancy relieving some nabob, or rajpoot, of his plethora of wealth. Come—will you assist, will you be auxiliary ? Ten chances but you plead your own cause, man, for I may be brought up by the sabre or a bow-string before I make my pack up ; then your road to Menie will be free and open, and as you will be possessed of the situation of comforter *ex officio*, you may take her " with the tear in her ee " as old saws advise.'

'Mr. Richard Middlemas,' said Hartley, 'I wish it were possible for me to tell you, in the few words which I intend to bestow on you, whether I pity you or despise you the most. Heaven has placed happiness, competence, and content within your power, and you are willing to cast them away to gratify ambition and avarice. Were I to give an advice on this subject, either to Dr. Gray or his daughter, it would be to break off all connexion with a man who, however clever by nature, may soon show himself a fool, and however honestly brought up, may also, upon temptation, prove himself a villain. You may lay aside the sneer, which is designed to be a sarcastic smile. I will not attempt to do this, because I am convinced that my advice would be of no use unless it could come unattended with suspicion of my motives. I will hasten my departure from this house that we may not meet again ; and I will leave it to God Almighty to protect honesty and innocence against the dangers which must attend vanity and folly.' So saying, he turned contemptuously from the youthful votary of ambition, and left the garden.

'Stop,' said Middlemas, struck with the picture which had been held up to his conscience—'Stop, Adam Hartley, and I will confess to you——' But his words were uttered in a faint and hesitating manner, and either never reached Hartley's ear, or failed in changing his purpose of departure.

When he was out of the garden, Middlemas began to recall his usual boldness of disposition—'Had he stayed a moment longer,' he said, 'I would have turned Papist, and made him my ghostly confessor. The yeomanly churl ! I would give something to know how he has got such a hank over me. What are Menie Gray's engagements to him ? She has given him his answer, and what right has he to come betwixt her and me ? If old Monçada had done

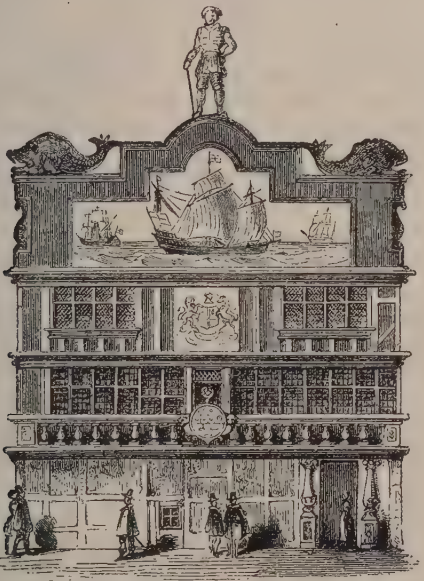
a grandfather's duty, and made suitable settlements on me, this plan of marrying the sweet girl, and settling here in her native place, might have done well enough. But to live the life of the poor drudge her father—to be at the command and call of every boor for twenty miles round!—why, the labours of a higgler, who travels scores of miles to barter pins, ribbons, snuff and tobacco, against the housewife's private stock of eggs, mort-skins, and tallow, is more profitable, less laborious, and faith, I think, equally respectable. No, no—unless I can find wealth nearer home, I will seek it where every one can have it for the gathering; and so I will down to the Swan Inn, and hold a final consultation with my friend.'

CHAPTER V

THE friend whom Middlemas expected to meet at the Swan, was a person already mentioned in this history by the name of Tom Hillary, bred an attorney's clerk in the ancient town of Novum Castrum—*doctus utriusque juris*, as far as a few months in the service of Mr. Lawford, town-clerk of Middlemas, could render him so. The last mention that we made of this gentleman was when his gold-laced hat veiled its splendour before the fresher mounted beavers of the 'prentices of Dr. Gray. That was now about five years since, and it was within six months that he had made his appearance in Middlemas, a very different sort of personage from that which he seemed at his departure.

He was now called Captain; his dress was regimental, and his language martial. He appeared to have plenty of cash, for he not only, to the great surprise of the parties, paid certain old debts which he had left unsettled behind him, and that notwithstanding his having, as his old practice told him, a good defence of prescription, but even sent the minister a guinea to the assistance of the parish poor. These acts of justice and benevolence were bruited abroad, greatly to the honour of one, who, so long absent, had neither forgotten his just debts. nor hardened his heart

against the cries of the needy. His merits were thought the higher, when it was understood he had served the Honourable East India Company—that wonderful company of merchants, who may indeed, with the strictest propriety, be termed princes. It was about the middle of the eighteenth



THE OLD EAST INDIA HOUSE, LEADENHALL STREET, 1648

century, and the directors in Leadenhall Street were silently laying the foundation of that immense empire, which afterwards rose like an exhalation, and now astonishes Europe, as well as Asia, with its formidable extent and stupendous strength. Britain had now begun to lend a wondering ear to the account of battles fought, and cities won, in the East; and was surprised by the return of individuals who had left their native country as adventurers,

but now reappeared there surrounded by Oriental wealth and Oriental luxury, which dimmed even the splendour of the most wealthy of the British nobility. In this new-found El Dorado, Hillary had, it seems, been a labourer, and, if he told truth, to some purpose, though he was far from having completed the harvest which he meditated. He spoke, indeed, of making investments; and, as a mere matter of fancy, he consulted his old master, Clerk Lawford, concerning the purchase of a moorland farm of three thousand acres, for which he would be content to give three or four thousand guineas, providing the game was plenty, and the trouting in the brook such as had been represented by advertisement. But he did not wish to make any extensive landed purchase at present. It was necessary to keep up his interest in Leadenhall Street; and in that view, it would be impolitic to part with his India stock and India bonds. In short, it was folly to think of settling on a poor thousand or twelve hundred a year, when one was in the prime of life, and had no liver complaint; and so he was determined to double the Cape once again, ere he retired to the chimney-corner for life. All he wished was, to pick up a few clever fellows for his regiment, or rather for his own company; and as in all his travels he had never seen finer fellows than about Middlemas, he was willing to give them the preference in completing his levy. In fact, it was making men of them at once, for a few white faces never failed to strike terror into these black rascals; and then, not to mention the good things that were going at the storming of a pettah, or the plundering of a pagoda, most of these tawny dogs carried so much treasure about their persons that a won battle was equal to a mine of gold to the victors.

The natives of Middlemas listened to the noble captain's marvels with different feelings, as their temperaments were saturnine or sanguine. But none could deny that such things had been; and, as the narrator was known to be a bold dashing fellow, possessed of some abilities, and according to the general opinion, not likely to be withheld by any peculiar scruples of conscience, there was no giving any good reason why Hillary should not have been as successful as others in the field which India, agitated as it

was by war and intestine disorders, seemed to offer to every enterprising adventurer. He was accordingly received by his old acquaintances at Middlemas rather with the respect due to his supposed wealth, than in a manner corresponding with his former humble pretensions.

Some of the notables of the village did indeed keep aloof. Among these, the chief was Dr. Gray, who was an enemy to everything that approached to fanfaronade, and knew enough of the world to lay it down as a sort of general rule, that he who talks a great deal of fighting is seldom a brave soldier, and he who always speaks about wealth is seldom a rich man at bottom. Clerk Lawford was also shy, notwithstanding his *communings* with Hillary upon the subject of his intended purchase. The coolness of the captain's old employer towards him was by some supposed to arise out of certain circumstances attending their former connexion; but as the clerk himself never explained what these were, it is unnecessary to make any conjectures upon the subject.

Richard Middlemas very naturally renewed his intimacy with his former comrade, and it was from Hillary's conversation that he had adopted the enthusiasm respecting India which we have heard him express. It was indeed impossible for a youth, at once inexperienced in the world and possessed of a most sanguine disposition, to listen without sympathy to the glowing descriptions of Hillary, who, though only a recruiting captain, had all the eloquence of a recruiting sergeant. Palaces rose like mushrooms in his descriptions; groves of lofty trees, and aromatic shrubs unknown to the chilly soils of Europe, were tenanted by every object of the chase, from the royal tiger down to the jackal. The luxuries of a nautch, and the peculiar Oriental beauty of the enchantresses who performed their voluptuous Eastern dances for the pleasure of the haughty English conquerors, were no less attractive than the battles and sieges on which the captain at other times expatiated. Not a stream did he mention but flowed over sands of gold, and not a palace that was inferior to those of the celebrated Fata Morgana. His descriptions seemed steeped in odours, and his every phrase perfumed in ottar of roses. The interviews at which these descriptions took place often ended in a bottle of

choicer wine than the Swan Inn afforded, with some other appendages of the table, which the captain, who was a *bon vivant*, had procured from Edinburgh. From this good cheer Middlemas was doomed to retire to the homely evening meal of his master, where not all the simple beauties of Menie were able to overcome his disgust at the coarseness of the provisions, or his unwillingness to answer questions concerning the diseases of the wretched peasants who were subjected to his inspection.

Richard's hopes of being acknowledged by his father had long since vanished, and the rough repulse and subsequent neglect on the part of Monçada had satisfied him that his grandfather was inexorable, and that neither then, nor at any future time, did he mean to realize the visions which Nurse Jamieson's splendid figments had encouraged him to entertain. Ambition, however, was not lulled to sleep, though it was no longer nourished by the same hopes which had at first awakened it. The Indian captain's lavish oratory supplied the themes which had been at first derived from the legends of the nursery ; the exploits of a Lawrence and a Clive, as well as the magnificent opportunities of acquiring wealth to which these exploits opened the road, disturbed the slumbers of the young adventurer. There was nothing to counteract these except his love for Menie Gray, and the engagements into which it had led him. But his addresses had been paid to Menie as much for the gratification of his vanity, as from any decided passion for that innocent and guileless being. He was desirous of carrying off the prize for which Hartley, whom he never loved, had the courage to contend with him. Then Menie Gray had been beheld with admiration by men his superiors in rank and fortune, but with whom his ambition incited him to dispute the prize. No doubt, though urged to play the gallant at first rather from vanity than any other cause, the frankness and modesty with which his suit was admitted, made their natural impression on his heart. He was grateful to the beautiful creature who acknowledged the superiority of his person and accomplishments, and fancied himself as devotedly attached to her, as her personal charms and mental merits would have rendered any one who was less vain or selfish than her lover. Still his passion for the

surgeon's daughter ought not, he prudentially determined, to bear more than its due weight in a case so very important as the determining his line of life ; and this he smoothed over to his conscience, by repeating to himself that Menie's interest was as essentially concerned as his own in postponing their marriage to the establishment of his fortune. How many young couples had been ruined by a premature union !

The contemptuous conduct of Hartley in their last interview, had done something to shake his comrade's confidence in the truth of this reasoning, and to lead him to suspect that he was playing a very sordid and unmanly part, in trifling with the happiness of this amiable and unfortunate young woman. It was in this doubtful humour that he repaired to the Swan Inn, where he was anxiously expected by his friend the captain.

When they were comfortably seated over a bottle of Paxarete, Middlemas began, with characteristical caution, to sound his friend about the ease or difficulty with which an individual, desirous of entering the Company's service, might have an opportunity of getting a commission. If Hillary had answered truly, he would have replied, that it was extremely easy ; for, at that time, the East India service presented no charms to that superior class of people who have since struggled for admittance under its banners. But the worthy captain replied that though, in the general case, it might be difficult for a young man to obtain a commission without serving for some years as a cadet, yet, under his own protection, a young man entering his regiment, and fitted for such a situation, might be sure of an ensigncy, if not a lieutenancy, as soon as ever they set foot in India. ' If you, my dear fellow,' continued he, extending his hand to Middlemas, ' would think of changing sheep-head broth and haggis for mulligatawny and curry, I can only say that though it is indispensable that you should enter into the service at first simply as a cadet, yet, by——, you should live like a brother on the passage with me ; and no sooner were we through the surf at Madras, than I would put you in the way of acquiring both wealth and glory. You have, I think, some trifle of money—a couple of thousands or so ? '

' About a thousand or twelve hundred,' said Richard,

affecting the indifference of his companion, but feeling privately humbled by the scantiness of his resources.

'It is quite as much as you will find necessary for the outfit and passage,' said his adviser; 'and, indeed, if you had not a farthing, it would be the same thing; for if I once say to a friend, I'll help you, Tom Hillary is not the man to start for fear of the cowries. However, it is as well you have something of a capital of your own to begin upon.'

'Yes,' replied the proselyte. 'I should not like to be a burden on any one. I have some thoughts, to tell you the truth, to marry before I leave Britain; and in that case, you know, cash will be necessary, whether my wife goes out with us, or remains behind, till she hear how luck goes with me. So, after all, I may have to borrow a few hundreds of you.'

'What the devil is that you say, Dick, about marrying and giving in marriage?' replied his friend. 'What can put it into the head of a gallant young fellow like you, just rising twenty-one, and six feet high on your stocking-soles, to make a slave of yourself for life? No, no, Dick, that will never do. Remember the old song,

> Bachelor Bluff, bachelor Bluff,
> Hey for a heart that is rugged and tough!'

'Aye, aye, that sounds very well,' replied Middlemas; 'but then one must shake off a number of old recollections.'

'The sooner the better, Dick; old recollections are like old clothes, and should be sent off by wholesale; they only take up room in one's wardrobe, and it would be old-fashioned to wear them. But you look grave upon it. Who the devil is it that has made such a hole in your heart?'

'Pshaw!' answered Middlemas, 'I'm sure you must remember—Menie—my master's daughter.'

'What, Miss Green, the old pottercarrier's daughter?—a likely girl enough, I think.'

'My master is a surgeon,' said Richard, 'not an apothecary, and his name is Gray.'

'Aye, aye, Green or Gray—what does it signify? He sells his own drugs, I think, which we in the south call being a pottercarrier. The girl is a likely girl enough for a Scottish ballroom. But is she up to anything? Has she any *nous*?'

'Why, she is a sensible girl, save in loving me,' answered Richard; 'and that, as Benedict says, is no proof of her wisdom, and no great argument of her folly.'

'But has she spirit—spunk—dash—a spice of the devil about her?'

'Not a pennyweight—the kindest, simplest, and most manageable of human beings,' answered the lover.

'She won't do then,' said the monitor in a decisive tone. 'I am sorry for it, Dick: but she will never do. There are some women in the world that can bear their share in the bustling life we live in India—aye, and I have known some of them drag forward husbands that would otherwise have stuck fast in the mud till the day of judgement. Heaven knows how they paid the turnpikes they pushed them through! But these were none of your simple Susans, that think their eyes are good for nothing but to look at their husbands, or their fingers but to sew baby-clothes. Depend on it, you must give up your matrimony, or your views of preferment. If you wilfully tie a clog round your throat, never think of running a race; but do not suppose that your breaking off with the lass will make any very terrible catastrophe. A scene there may be at parting; but you will soon forget her among the native girls, and she will fall in love with Mr. Tapeitout, the minister's assistant and successor. She is not goods for the Indian market, I assure you.'

Among the capricious weaknesses of humanity, that one is particularly remarkable which inclines us to esteem persons and things not by their real value, or even by our own judgement, so much as by the opinion of others who are often very incompetent judges. Dick Middlemas had been urged forward in his suit to Menie Gray, by his observing how much her partner, a booby laird, had been captivated by her; and she was now lowered in his esteem, because an impudent low-lived coxcomb had presumed to talk of her with disparagement. Either of these worthy gentlemen would have been as capable of enjoying the beauties of Homer as judging of the merits of Menie Gray.

Indeed the ascendancy which this bold-talking, promise-making soldier had acquired over Dick Middlemas, wilful as he was in general, was of a despotic nature; because

the captain, though greatly inferior in information and talent to the youth whose opinions he swayed, had skill in suggesting those tempting views of rank and wealth, to which Richard's imagination had been from childhood most accessible. One promise he exacted from Middlemas, as a condition of the services which he was to render him—It was absolute silence on the subject of his destination for India, and the views upon which it took place. 'My recruits,' said the captain, 'have been all marched off for the dépôt at the Isle of Wight; and I want to leave Scotland, and particularly this little burgh, without being worried to death, of which I must despair, should it come to be known that I can provide young griffins, as we call them, with commissions. Gad, I should carry off all the first-born of Middlemas as cadets, and none are so scrupulous as I am about making promises. I am as trusty as a Trojan for that; and you know I cannot do that for every one which I would for an old friend like Dick Middlemas.'

Dick promised secrecy, and it was agreed that the two friends should not even leave the burgh in company, but that the captain should set off first, and his recruit should join him at Edinburgh, where his enlistment might be attested; and then they were to travel together to town, and arrange matters for their Indian voyage.

Notwithstanding the definitive arrangement which was thus made for his departure, Middlemas thought from time to time with anxiety and regret about quitting Menie Gray, after the engagement which had passed between them. The resolution was taken, however; the blow was necessarily to be struck; and her ungrateful lover, long since determined against the life of domestic happiness which he might have enjoyed had his views been better regulated, was now occupied with the means, not indeed of breaking off with her entirely, but of postponing all thoughts of their union until the success of his expedition to India.

He might have spared himself all anxiety on this last subject. The wealth of that India to which he was bound would not have bribed Menie Gray to have left her father's roof against her father's commands; still less when, deprived of his two assistants, he must be reduced to the necessity of continued exertion in his declining life, and

therefore might have accounted himself altogether deserted, had his daughter departed from him at the same time. But though it would have been her unalterable determination not to accept any proposal of an immediate union of their fortunes, Menie could not, with all a lover's power of self-deception, succeed in persuading herself to be satisfied with Richard's conduct towards her. Modesty, and a becoming pride, prevented her from seeming to notice, but could not prevent her from bitterly feeling, that her lover was preferring the pursuits of ambition to the humble lot which he might have shared with her, and which promised content at least, if not wealth.

'If he had loved me as he pretended,' such was the unwilling conviction that rose on her mind, 'my father would surely not have ultimately refused him the same terms which he held out to Hartley. His objections would have given way to my happiness, nay, to Richard's importunities, which would have removed his suspicions of the unsettled cast of his disposition. But I fear—I fear Richard hardly thought the terms proposed were worthy of his acceptance. Would it not have been natural too, that he should have asked me, engaged as we stand to each other, to have united our faith before his quitting Europe, when I might either have remained here with my father, or accompanied him to India in quest of that fortune which he is so eagerly pushing for? It would have been wrong—very wrong—in me to have consented to such a proposal, unless my father had authorized it; but surely it would have been natural that Richard should have offered it? Alas! men do not know how to love like women! Their attachment is only one of a thousand other passions and predilections,—they are daily engaged in pleasures which blunt their feelings, and in business which distracts them. We—we sit at home to weep, and to think how coldly our affections are repaid!'

The time was now arrived at which Richard Middlemas had a right to demand the property vested in the hands of the town-clerk and Doctor Gray. He did so, and received it accordingly. His late guardian naturally inquired what views he had formed in entering on life? The imagination of the ambitious aspirant saw in this simple question

a desire, on the part of the worthy man, to offer, and perhaps press upon him, the same proposal which he had made to Hartley. He hastened, therefore, to answer dryly, that he had some hopes held out to him which he was not at liberty to communicate ; but that the instant he reached London, he would write to the guardian of his youth, and acquaint him with the nature of his prospects, which he was happy to say were rather of a pleasing character.

Gideon, who supposed that at this critical period of his life, the father, or grandfather, of the young man might perhaps have intimated a disposition to open some intercourse with him, only replied, 'You have been the child of mystery, Richard ; and as you came to me, so you leave me. Then I was ignorant from whence you came, and now I know not whither you are going. It is not, perhaps, a very favourable point in your horoscope that everything connected with you is a secret. But as I shall always think with kindness on him whom I have known so long, so when you remember the old man, you ought not to forget that he has done his duty to you to the extent of his means and power, and taught you that noble profession by means of which, wherever your lot casts you, you may always gain your bread, and alleviate at the same time the distresses of your fellow creatures.' Middlemas was excited by the simple kindness of his master, and poured forth his thanks with the greater profusion that he was free from the terror of the emblematical collar and chain, which a moment before seemed to glisten in the hand of his guardian and gape to enclose his neck.

'One word more,' said Mr. Gray, producing a small ring-case. 'This valuable ring was forced upon me by your unfortunate mother. I have no right to it, having been amply paid for my services ; and I only accepted it with the purpose of keeping it for you till this moment should arrive. It may be useful, perhaps, should there occur any question about your identity.'

'Thanks, once more, my more than father, for this precious relic, which may indeed be useful. You shall be repaid, if India has diamonds left.'

'India and diamonds!' said Gray. 'Is your head turned, child?'

'I mean,' stammered Middlemas, 'if London has any Indian diamonds.'

'Pooh! you foolish lad,' answered Gray, 'how should you buy diamonds, or what should I do with them, if you gave me ever so many? Get you gone with you while I am angry.' The tears were glistening in the old man's eyes—'If I get pleased with you again, I shall not know how to part with you.'

The parting of Middlemas with poor Menie was yet more affecting. Her sorrow revived in his mind all the liveliness of a first love, and he redeemed his character for sincere attachment, by not only imploring an instant union, but even going so far as to propose renouncing his more splendid prospects, and sharing Mr. Gray's humble toil, if by doing so he could secure his daughter's hand. But though there was consolation in this testimony of her lover's faith, Menie Gray was not so unwise as to accept of sacrifices which might afterwards have been repented of.

'No, Richard,' she said, 'it seldom ends happily when people alter, in a moment of agitated feeling, plans which have been adopted under mature deliberation. I have long seen that your views were extended far beyond so humble a station as this place affords promise of. It is natural they should do so, considering that the circumstances of your birth seemed connected with riches and with rank. Go, then, seek that riches and rank. It is possible your mind may be changed in the pursuit, and if so, think no more about Menie Gray. But if it should be otherwise, we may meet again, and do not believe for a moment that there can be a change in Menie Gray's feelings towards you.'

At this interview much more was said than it is necessary to repeat, much more thought than was actually said. Nurse Jamieson, in whose chamber it took place, folded her *bairns*, as she called them, in her arms, and declared that Heaven had made them for each other, and that she would not ask of Heaven to live beyond the day when she should see them bridegroom and bride.

At length it became necessary that the parting scene should end; and Richard Middlemas, mounting a horse which he had hired for the journey, set off for Edinburgh, to which metropolis he had already forwarded his heavy

baggage. Upon the road the idea more than once occurred to him, that even yet he had better return to Middlemas, and secure his happiness by uniting himself at once to Menie Gray and to humble competence. But from the moment that he rejoined his friend Hillary at their appointed place of rendezvous, he became ashamed even to hint at any change of purpose; and his late excited feelings were forgotten, unless in so far as they confirmed his resolution that, as soon as he had attained a certain portion of wealth and consequence, he would haste to share them with Menie Gray. Yet his gratitude to her father did not appear to have slumbered, if we may judge from the gift of a very handsome cornelian seal, set in gold, and bearing engraved upon it gules, a lion rampant within a bordure or, which was carefully dispatched to Stevenlaw's Land, Middlemas, with a suitable letter. Menie knew the handwriting and watched her father's looks as he read it, thinking, perhaps, that it had turned on a different topic. Her father pshawed and poohed a good deal when he had finished the billet, and examined the seal.

'Dick Middlemas,' he said, 'is but a fool after all, Menie. I am sure I am not like to forget him that he should send me a token of remembrance; and if he would be so absurd, could he not have sent me the improved lithotomical apparatus? And what have I, Gideon Gray, to do with the arms of my Lord Gray? No, no,—my old silver stamp, with the double G upon it, will serve my turn—But put the bonnie dye[1] away, Menie, my dear—it was kindly meant, at any rate.'

The reader cannot doubt that the seal was safely and carefully preserved.

[1] Pretty toy.

CHAPTER VI

A lazar-house it seemed, wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased.

MILTON.

AFTER the captain had finished his business, amongst which he did not forget to have his recruit regularly attested as a candidate for glory in the service of the Honourable East India Company, the friends left Edinburgh. From thence they got a passage by sea to Newcastle, where Hillary had also some regimental affairs to transact before he joined his regiment. At Newcastle the captain had the good luck to find a small brig, commanded by an old acquaintance and schoolfellow, which was just about to sail for the Isle of Wight. 'I have arranged for our passage with him,' he said to Middlemas—'for when you are at the dépôt, you can learn a little of your duty, which cannot be so well taught on board of ship, and then I will find it easier to have you promoted.'

'Do you mean,' said Richard, 'that I am to stay at the Isle of Wight all the time that you are jigging it away in London?'

'Aye, indeed do I,' said his comrade, 'and it's best for you too; whatever business you have in London, I can do it for you as well, or something better, than yourself.'

'But I choose to transact my own business myself, Captain Hillary,' said Richard.

'Then you ought to have remained your own master, Mr. Cadet Middlemas. At present you are an enlisted recruit of the Honourable East India Company; I am your officer, and should you hesitate to follow me aboard, why, you foolish fellow, I could have you sent on board in handcuffs.'

This was jestingly spoken; but yet there was something in the tone which hurt Middlemas's pride and alarmed his fears. He had observed of late that his friend, especially when in company of others, talked to him with an air of command or superiority, difficult to be endured, and yet so

closely allied to the freedom often exercised betwixt two intimates, that he could not find any proper mode of rebuffing or resenting it. Such manifestations of authority were usually followed by an instant renewal of their intimacy; but in the present case that did not so speedily ensue.

Middlemas, indeed, consented to go with his companion to the Isle of Wight, perhaps because if he should quarrel with him, the whole plan of his Indian voyage, and all the hopes built upon it, must fall to the ground. But he altered his purpose of entrusting his comrade with his little fortune, to lay out as his occasions might require, and resolved himself to overlook the expenditure of his money, which, in the form of Bank of England notes, was safely deposited in his travelling trunk. Captain Hillary, finding that some hint he had thrown out on this subject was disregarded, appeared to think no more about it.

The voyage was performed with safety and celerity; and having coasted the shores of that beautiful island which he who once sees never forgets, through whatever part of the world his future path may lead him, the vessel was soon anchored off the little town of Ryde; and, as the waves were uncommonly still, Richard felt the sickness diminish, which, for a considerable part of the passage, had occupied his attention more than anything else.

The master of the brig, in honour to his passengers and affection to his old schoolfellow, had formed an awning upon deck, and proposed to have the pleasure of giving them a little treat before they left his vessel. Lobscouse, sea-pie, and other delicacies of a naval description, had been provided in a quantity far disproportionate to the number of the guests. But the punch which succeeded was of excellent quality, and portentously strong. Captain Hillary pushed it round, and insisted upon his companion taking his full share in the merry bout, the rather that, as he facetiously said, there had been some dryness between them, which good liquor would be sovereign in removing. He renewed, with additional splendours, the various panoramic scenes of India and Indian adventures which had first excited the ambition of Middlemas, and assured him that even if he should not be able to get him a com-

mission instantly, yet a short delay would only give him time to become better acquainted with his military duties ; and Middlemas was too much elevated by the liquor he had drunk to see any difficulty which could oppose itself to his fortunes. Whether those who shared in the compotation were more seasoned topers—whether Middlemas drank more than they—or whether, as he himself afterwards suspected, his cup had been drugged, like those of King Duncan's bodyguard, it is certain that, on this occasion, he passed with unusual rapidity through all the different phases of the respectable state of drunkenness—laughed, sang, whooped. and hallooed, was maudlin in his fondness, and frantic in his wrath, and at length fell into a fast and imperturbable sleep.

The effect of the liquor displayed itself, as usual, in a hundred wild dreams of parched deserts, and of serpents whose bite inflicted the most intolerable thirst—of the suffering of the Indian on the death-stake—and the torments of the infernal regions themselves ; when at length he awakened, and it appeared that the latter vision was in fact realized. The sounds which had at first influenced his dreams, and at length broken his slumbers, were of the most horrible, as well as the most melancholy description. They came from the ranges of pallet-beds, which were closely packed together in a species of military hospital, where a burning fever was the prevalent complaint. Many of the patients were under the influence of a high delirium, during which they shouted, shrieked, laughed, blasphemed, and uttered the most horrible imprecations. Others, sensible of their condition, bewailed it with low groans, and some attempts at devotion, which showed their ignorance of the principles, and even the forms, of religion. Those who were convalescent talked ribaldry in a loud tone, or whispered to each other in cant language, upon schemes which, as far as a passing phrase could be understood by a novice, had relation to violent and criminal exploits.

Richard Middlemas's astonishment was equal to his horror. He had but one advantage over the poor wretches with whom he was classed, and it was in enjoying the luxury of a pallet to himself—most of the others being occupied by two unhappy beings. He saw no one who

appeared to attend to the wants, or to heed the complaints, of the wretches around him, or to whom he could offer any appeal against his present situation. He looked for his clothes that he might arise and extricate himself from this den of horrors; but his clothes were nowhere to be seen, nor did he see his portmanteau or sea-chest. It was much to be apprehended he would never see them more.

Then, but too late, he remembered the insinuations which had passed current respecting his friend the captain, who was supposed to have been discharged by Mr. Lawford on account of some breach of trust in the town-clerk's service. But that he should have trepanned the friend who had reposed his whole confidence in him—that he should have plundered him of his fortune, and placed him in this house of pestilence with the hope that death might stifle his tongue—were iniquities not to have been anticipated, even if the worst of these reports were true.

But Middlemas resolved not to be awanting to himself. This place must be visited by some officer, military or medical, to whom he would make an appeal, and alarm his fears at least, if he could not awaken his conscience. While he revolved these distracting thoughts, tormented at the same time by a burning thirst which he had no means of satisfying, he endeavoured to discover if, amongst those stretched upon the pallets nearest him, he could not discern some one likely to enter into conversation with him, and give him some information about the nature and customs of this horrid place. But the bed nearest him was occupied by two fellows, who, although to judge from their gaunt cheeks, hollow eyes, and ghastly looks, they were apparently recovering from the disease, and just rescued from the jaws of death, were deeply engaged in endeavouring to cheat each other of a few halfpence at a game of cribbage, mixing the terms of the game with oaths not loud but deep; each turn of luck being hailed by the winner as well as the loser with execrations, which seemed designed to blight both body and soul, now used as the language of triumph, and now as reproaches against fortune.

Next to the gamblers was a pallet, occupied indeed by two bodies, but only one of which was living—the other sufferer had been recently relieved from his agony.

'He is dead—he is dead!' said the wretched survivor.

'Then do you die too, and be d—d,' answered one of the players, 'and then there will be a pair of you, as Pugg says.'

'I tell you he is growing stiff and cold,' said the poor wretch—'the dead is no bedfellow for the living—For God's sake, help to rid me of the corpse.'

'Aye, and get the credit of having *done* him—as may be the case with yourself, friend—for he had some two or three hoggs about him'——

'You know you took the last rap from his breeches-pocket not an hour ago,' expostulated the poor convalescent —'But help me to take the body out of the bed, and I will not tell the *jigger-dubber* that you have been beforehand with him.'

'You tell the *jigger-dubber*!' answered the cribbage-player. 'Such another word, and I will twist your head round till your eyes look at the drummer's handwriting on your back. Hold your peace, and don't bother our game with your gammon, or I will make you as mute as your bedfellow.'

The unhappy wretch, exhausted, sank back beside his hideous companion, and the usual jargon of the game, interlarded with execrations, went on as before.

From this specimen of the most obdurate indifference, contrasted with the last excess of misery, Middlemas became satisfied how little could be made of an appeal to the humanity of his fellow-sufferers. His heart sank within him, and the thoughts of the happy and peaceful home which he might have called his own, arose before his overheated fancy with a vividness of perception that bordered upon insanity. He saw before him the rivulet which wanders through the burgh-muir of Middlemas, where he had so often set little mills for the amusement of Menie while she was a child. One draught of it would have been worth all the diamonds of the East, which of late he had worshipped with such devotion; but that draught was denied to him as to Tantalus.

Rallying his senses from this passing illusion, and knowing enough of the practice of the medical art to be aware of the necessity of preventing his ideas from wandering, if possible, he endeavoured to recollect that he was a surgeon, and,

after all, should not have the extreme fear for the interior of a military hospital which its horrors might inspire into strangers to the profession. But though he strove, by such recollections, to rally his spirits, he was not the less aware of the difference betwixt the condition of a surgeon who might have attended such a place in the course of his duty, and a poor inhabitant who was at once a patient and a prisoner.

A footstep was now heard in the apartment, which seemed to silence all the varied sounds of woe that filled it. The cribbage-party hid their cards, and ceased their oaths; other wretches, whose complaints had arisen to frenzy, left off their wild exclamations and entreaties for assistance. Agony softened her shriek, Insanity hushed its senseless clamours, and even Death seemed desirous to stifle his parting groan in the presence of Captain Seelencooper. This official was the superintendent, or, as the miserable inhabitants termed him, the governor of the hospital. He had all the air of having been originally a turnkey in some ill-regulated jail—a stout, short, bandy-legged man, with one eye, and a double portion of ferocity in that which remained. He wore an old-fashioned tarnished uniform, which did not seem to have been made for him; and the voice in which this minister of humanity addressed the sick, was that of a boatswain shouting in the midst of a storm. He had pistols and a cutlass in his belt; for his mode of administration being such as provoked even hospital patients to revolt, his life had been more than once in danger amongst them. He was followed by two assistants, who carried handcuffs and strait-jackets.

As Seelencooper made his rounds, complaint and pain were hushed, and the flourish of the bamboo, which he bore in his hand, seemed powerful as the wand of a magician to silence all complaint and remonstrance.

'I tell you the meat is as sweet as a nosegay—and for the bread, it's good enough, and too good, for a set of lubbers that lie shamming Abraham, and consuming the Right Honourable Company's victuals—I don't speak to them that are really sick, for God knows I am always for humanity.'

'If that be the case, sir,' said Richard Middlemas, whose

lair the captain had approached, while he was thus answering the low and humble complaints of those by whose bedside he passed—'if that be the case, sir, I hope your humanity will make you attend to what I say.'

'And who the devil are you?' said the governor, turning on him his single eye of fire, while a sneer gathered on his harsh features, which were so well qualified to express it.

'My name is Middlemas—I come from Scotland, and have been sent here by some strange mistake. I am neither a private soldier, nor am I indisposed more than by the heat of this cursed place.'

'Why then, friend, all I have to ask you is, whether you are an attested recruit or not?'

'I was attested at Edinburgh,' said Middlemas, 'but'——

'But what the devil would you have then?—you are enlisted—the captain and the doctor sent you here—surely they know best whether you are private or officer, sick or well.'

'But I was promised,' said Middlemas, 'promised by Tom Hillary'——

'Promised, were you? Why, there is not a man here that has not been promised something by somebody or another, or perhaps has promised something to himself. This is the land of promise, my smart fellow, but you know it is India that must be the land of performance. So good morning to you. The doctor will come his rounds presently and put you all to rights.'

'Stay but one moment—one moment only—I have been robbed.'

'Robbed! look you there now,' said the governor—'everybody that comes here has been robbed. Egad, I am the luckiest fellow in Europe—other people in my line have only thieves and blackguards upon their hands; but none come to my ken but honest, decent, unfortunate gentlemen, that have been robbed!'

'Take care how you treat this so lightly, sir,' said Middlemas; 'I have been robbed of a thousand pounds.'

Here Governor Seelencooper's gravity was totally overcome, and his laugh was echoed by several of the patients, either because they wished to curry favour with the superintendent, or from the feeling which influences evil

spirits to rejoice in the tortures of those who are sent to share their agony.

'A thousand pounds!' exclaimed Captain Seelencooper, as he recovered his breath,—'Come, that's a good one—I like a fellow that does not make two bites of a cherry—why, there is not a cull in the ken that pretends to have lost more than a few hoggs, and here is a servant to the Honourable Company that has been robbed of a thousand pounds! Well done, Mr. Tom of Ten Thousand—you're a credit to the house and to the service, and so good morning to you.'

He passed on, and Richard, starting up in a storm of anger and despair, found, as he would have called after him, that his voice, betwixt thirst and agitation, refused its office. 'Water, water!' he said, laying hold, at the same time, of one of the assistants who followed Seelencooper by the sleeve. The fellow looked carelessly round; there was a jug stood by the side of the cribbage-players, which he reached to Middlemas, bidding him 'Drink and be d—d'.

The man's back was no sooner turned, than the gamester threw himself from his own bed into that of Middlemas, and grasping firm hold of the arm of Richard, ere he could carry the vessel to his head, swore he should not have his booze. It may be readily conjectured, that the pitcher thus anxiously and desperately reclaimed, contained something better than the pure element. In fact, a large proportion of it was gin. The jug was broken in the struggle, and the liquor spilt. Middlemas dealt a blow to the assailant, which was amply and heartily repaid, and a combat would have ensued, but for the interference of the superintendent and his assistants, who, with a dexterity that showed them well acquainted with such emergencies, clapped a strait-waistcoat upon each of the antagonists. Richard's efforts at remonstrance only procured him a blow from Captain Seelencooper's rattan, and a tender admonition to hold his tongue, if he valued a whole skin.

Irritated at once by sufferings of the mind and of the body, tormented by raging thirst and by the sense of his own dreadful situation, the mind of Richard Middlemas seemed to be on the point of becoming unsettled. He felt an insane desire to imitate and reply to the groans, oaths, and ribaldry, which, as soon as the superintendent quitted

the hospital, echoed around him. He longed, though he struggled against the impulse, to vie in curses with the reprobate, and in screams with the maniac. But his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, his mouth itself seemed choked with ashes ; there came upon him a dimness of sight, a rushing sound in his ears, and the powers of life were for a time suspended.

CHAPTER VII

A wise physician, skill'd our wounds to heal,
Is more than armies to the common weal.
POPE'S *Homer.*

As Middlemas returned to his senses, he was sensible that his blood felt more cool ; that the feverish throb of his pulsation was diminished ; that the ligatures on his person were removed, and his lungs performed their functions more freely. One assistant was binding up a vein, from which a considerable quantity of blood had been taken ; another, who had just washed the face of the patient, was holding aromatic vinegar to his nostrils. As he began to open his eyes, the person who had just completed the bandage said in Latin, but in a very low tone, and without raising his head , 'An non sis Ricardus ille Middlemas, ex civitate Middlemassiense ? Responde in lingua Latina.'

'Sum ille miserrimus,' replied Richard, again shutting his eyes ; for strange as it may seem, the voice of his comrade Adam Hartley, though his presence might be of so much consequence in this emergency, conveyed a pang to his wounded pride. He was conscious of unkindly, if not hostile, feelings towards his old companion ; he remembered the tone of superiority which he used to assume over him, and thus to lie stretched at his feet and in a manner at his mercy, aggravated his distress, by the feelings of the dying chieftain, 'Earl Percy sees my fall.' This was, however, too unreasonable an emotion to subsist above a minute. In the next, he availed himself of the Latin language, with which both were familiar (for in that time the

medical studies at the celebrated University of Edinburgh were, in a great measure, conducted in Latin), to tell in a few words his own folly, and the villany of Hillary.

'I must be gone instantly,' said Hartley—'Take courage—I trust to be able to assist you. In the meantime, take food and physic from none but my servant, who you see holds the sponge in his hand. You are in a place where a man's life has been taken for the sake of his gold sleeve-buttons.'

'Stay yet a moment,' said Middlemas—'Let me remove this temptation from my dangerous neighbours.'

He drew a small packet from his under-waistcoat, and put it into Hartley's hands.

'If I die,' he said, 'be my heir. You deserve her better than I.'

All answer was prevented by the hoarse voice of Seelencooper.

'Well, Doctor, will you carry through your patient?'

'Symptoms are dubious yet,' said the doctor—'That was an alarming swoon. You must have him carried into the private ward, and my young man shall attend him.'

'Why, if you command it, Doctor, needs must;—but I can tell you there is a man we both know that has a thousand reasons at least for keeping him in the public ward.'

'I know nothing of your thousand reasons,' said Hartley; 'I can only tell you that this young fellow is as well-limbed and likely a lad as the Company have among their recruits. It is my business to save him for their service, and if he dies by your neglecting what I direct, depend upon it I will not allow the blame to lie at my door. I will tell the general the charge I have given you.'

'The general!' said Seelencooper, much embarrassed—'Tell the general?—aye, about his health. But you will not say anything about what he may have said in his light-headed fits? My eyes! if you listen to what feverish patients say when the tantivy is in their brain, your back will soon break with tale-bearing, for I will warrant you plenty of them to carry.'

'Captain Seelencooper,' said the doctor, 'I do not meddle with your department in the hospital; my advice

to you is, not to trouble yourself with mine. I suppose, as I have a commission in the service, and have besides a regular diploma as a physician, I know when my patient is light-headed or otherwise. So do you let the man be carefully looked after, at your peril.'

Thus saying, he left the hospital, but not till, under pretext of again consulting the pulse, he pressed the patient's hand, as if to assure him once more of his exertions for his liberation.'

'My eyes!' muttered Seelencooper, 'this cockerel crows gallant, to come from a Scotch roost; but I would know well enough how to fetch the youngster off the perch, if it were not for the cure he has done on the general's pickaninies.'

Enough of this fell on Richard's ear to suggest hopes of deliverance, which were increased when he was shortly afterwards removed to a separate ward, a place much more decent in appearance, and inhabited only by two patients, who seemed petty officers. Although sensible that he had no illness save that weakness which succeeds violent agitation, he deemed it wisest to suffer himself still to be treated as a patient, in consideration that he should thus remain under his comrade's superintendence. Yet while preparing to avail himself of Hartley's good offices, the prevailing reflection of his secret bosom was the ungrateful sentiment, 'Had Heaven no other means of saving me than by the hands of him I like least on the face of the earth?'

Meanwhile, ignorant of the ungrateful sentiments of his comrade, and indeed wholly indifferent how he felt towards him, Hartley proceeded in doing him such service as was in his power, without any other object than the discharge of his own duty as a man and as a Christian. The manner in which he became qualified to render his comrade assistance requires some short explanation.

Our story took place at a period when the Directors of the East India Company, with that hardy and persevering policy which has raised to such a height the British Empire in the East, had determined to send a large reinforcement of European troops to the support of their power in India, then threatened by the kingdom of Mysore, of which the

celebrated Haidar Alí had usurped the government after dethroning his master. Considerable difficulty was found in obtaining recruits for that service. Those who might

Haidar Alí

have been otherwise disposed to be soldiers, were afraid of the climate, and of the species of banishment which the engagement implied ; and doubted also how far the engagements of the Company might be faithfully observed towards them when they were removed from the protection

of the British laws. For these and other reasons, the military service of the king was preferred, and that of the Company could only procure the worst recruits, although their zealous agents scrupled not to employ the worst means. Indeed the practice of kidnapping, or crimping, as it is technically called, was at that time general, whether for the colonies, or even for the king's troops ; and as the agents employed in such transactions must be of course entirely unscrupulous, there was not only much villany committed in the direct prosecution of the trade, but it gave rise incidentally to remarkable cases of robbery, and even murder. Such atrocities were of course concealed from the authorities for whom the levies were made, and the necessity of obtaining soldiers made men whose conduct was otherwise unexceptionable, cold in looking closely into the mode in which their recruiting-service was conducted.

The principal dépôt of the troops which were by these means assembled, was in the Isle of Wight, where, the season proving unhealthy, and the men themselves being many of them of a bad habit of body, a fever of a malignant character broke out amongst them, and speedily crowded with patients the military hospital, of which Mr. Seelencooper, himself an old and experienced crimp and kidnapper, had obtained the superintendence. Irregularities began to take place also among the soldiers who remained healthy, and the necessity of subjecting them to some discipline before they sailed was so evident, that several officers of the Company's naval service expressed their belief that otherwise there would be dangerous mutinies on the passage.

To remedy the first of these evils, the Court of Directors sent down to the island several of their medical servants, amongst whom was Hartley, whose qualifications had been amply certified by a medical board, before which he had passed an examination, besides his possessing a diploma from the University of Edinburgh as M.D.

To enforce the discipline of their soldiers, the Court committed full power to one of their own body, General Witherington. The general was an officer who had distinguished himself highly in their service. He had returned from India five or six years before, with a large fortune,

which he had rendered much greater by an advantageous marriage with a rich heiress. The general and his lady went little into society, but seemed to live entirely for their infant family, those in number being three, two boys and a girl. Although he had retired from the service, he willingly undertook the temporary charge committed to him, and taking a house at a considerable distance from the town of Ryde, he proceeded to enrol the troops into separate bodies, appoint officers of capacity to each, and by regular training and discipline, gradually to bring them into something resembling good order. He heard their complaints of ill usage in the articles of provisions and appointments, and did them upon all occasions the strictest justice, save that he was never known to restore one recruit to his freedom from the service, however unfairly or even illegally his attestation might have been obtained.

'It is none of my business,' said General Witherington, 'how you became soldiers,—soldiers I found you, and soldiers I will leave you. But I will take especial care that as soldiers you shall have everything, to a penny or a pin's head, that you are justly entitled to.' He went to work without fear or favour, reported many abuses to the Board of Directors, had several officers, commissaries, &c., removed from the service, and made his name as great a terror to the peculators at home as it had been to the enemies of Britain in Hindustan.

Captain Seelencooper and his associates in the hospital department heard and trembled, fearing that their turn should come next; but the general, who elsewhere examined all with his own eyes, showed a reluctance to visit the hospital in person. Public report industriously imputed this to fear of infection. Such was certainly the motive; though it was not fear for his own safety that influenced General Witherington, but he dreaded lest he should carry the infection home to the nursery on which he doted. The alarm of his lady was yet more unreasonably sensitive: she would scarcely suffer the children to walk abroad if the wind but blew from the quarter where the hospital was situated.

But Providence baffles the precautions of mortals. In a walk across the fields, chosen as the most sheltered and

sequestered, the children, with their train of Eastern and European attendants, met a woman who carried a child that was recovering from the small-pox. The anxiety of the father, joined to some religious scruples on the mother's part, had postponed inoculation, which was then scarcely come into general use. The infection caught like a quick-match, and ran like wildfire through all those in the family who had not previously had the disease. One of the general's children, the second boy, died, and two of the ayahs, or black female servants, had the same fate. The hearts of the father and mother would have been broken for the child they had lost, had not their grief been suspended by anxiety for the fate of those who lived, and who were confessed to be in imminent danger. They were like persons distracted, as the symptoms of the poor patients appeared gradually to resemble more nearly those of the child already lost.

While the parents were in this agony of apprehension, the general's principal servant, a native of Northumberland like himself, informed him one morning that there was a young man from the same county among the hospital doctors, who had publicly blamed the mode of treatment observed towards the patients, and spoken of another which he had seen practised with eminent success.

'Some impudent quack,' said the general, 'who would force himself into business by bold assertions. Doctor Tourniquet and Doctor Lancelot are men of high reputation.'

'Do not mention their reputation,' said the mother, with a mother's impatience; 'did they not let my sweet Reuben die? What avails the reputation of the physician, when the patient perisheth?'

'If his honour would but see Doctor Hartley,' said Winter, turning half towards the lady, then turning back again to his master. 'He is a very decent young man, who, I am sure, never expected what he said to reach your honour's ears; and he is a native of Northumberland.'

'Send a servant with a led horse,' said the general; 'let the young man come hither instantly.'

It is well known that the ancient mode of treating the small-pox was to refuse to the patient everything which Nature urged him to desire; and, in particular, to confine

him to heated rooms, beds loaded with blankets, and spiced wine, when nature called for cold water and fresh air. A different mode of treatment had of late been adventured upon by some practitioners, who preferred reason to authority, and Gideon Gray had followed it for several years with extraordinary success.

When General Witherington saw Hartley, he was startled at his youth; but when he heard him modestly, but with confidence, state the difference of the two modes of treatment, and the *rationale* of his practice, he listened with the most serious attention. So did his lady, her streaming eyes turning from Hartley to her husband, as if to watch what impression the arguments of the former were making upon the latter. General Witherington was silent for a few minutes after Hartley had finished his exposition, and seemed buried in profound reflection. 'To treat a fever, he said, 'in a manner which tends to produce one, seems indeed to be adding fuel to fire.'

'It is—it is,' said the lady. 'Let us trust this young man, General Witherington. We shall at least give our darlings the comforts of the fresh air and cold water for which they are pining.'

But the general remained undecided. 'Your reasoning,' he said to Hartley, 'seems plausible; but still it is only hypothesis. What can you show to support your theory, in opposition to the general practice?'

'My own observation,' replied the young man. 'Here is a memorandum-book of medical cases which I have witnessed. It contains twenty cases of small-pox, of which eighteen were recoveries.'

'And the two others?' said the general.

'Terminated fatally,' replied Hartley; 'we can as yet but partially disarm this scourge of the human race.'

'Young man,' continued the general, 'were I to say that a thousand gold mohurs were yours in case my children live under your treatment, what have you to peril in exchange?'

'My reputation,' answered Hartley firmly.

'And you could warrant on your reputation the recovery of your patients?'

'God forbid I should be presumptuous! But I think

I could warrant my using those means which, with God's blessing, afford the fairest chance of a favourable result.'

'Enough—you are modest and sensible, as well as bold, and I will trust you.'

The lady, on whom Hartley's words and manner had made a great impression, and who was eager to discontinue a mode of treatment which subjected the patients to the greatest pain and privation and had already proved unfortunate, eagerly acquiesced, and Hartley was placed in full authority in the sick-room.

Windows were thrown open, fires reduced or discontinued, loads of bed-clothes removed, cooling drinks superseded mulled wine and spices. The sick-nurses cried out murder. Doctors Tourniquet and Lancelot retired in disgust, menacing something like a general pestilence, in vengeance of what they termed rebellion against the neglect of the aphorisms of Hippocrates. Hartley proceeded quietly and steadily, and the patients got into a fair road of recovery.

The young Northumbrian was neither conceited nor artful; yet, with all his plainness of character, he could not but know the influence which a successful physician obtains over the parents of the children whom he has saved from the grave, and especially before the cure is actually completed. He resolved to use this influence in behalf of his old companion, trusting that the military tenacity of General Witherington would give way on consideration of the obligation so lately conferred upon him.

On his way to the general's house, which was at present his constant place of residence, he examined the packet which Middlemas had put into his hand. It contained the picture of Menie Gray, plainly set, and the ring, with brilliants, which Doctor Gray had given to Richard, as his mother's last gift. The first of these tokens extracted from honest Hartley a sigh, perhaps a tear of sad remembrance. 'I fear,' he said, 'she has not chosen worthily; but she shall be happy, if I can make her so.'

Arrived at the residence of General Witherington, our doctor went first to the sick apartment, and then carried to their parents the delightful account that the recovery of the children might be considered as certain.

'May the God of Israel bless thee, young man!' said the lady, trembling with emotion; 'thou hast wiped the tear from the eye of the despairing mother. And yet—alas! alas! still it must flow when I think of my cherub Reuben. Oh! Mr. Hartley, why did we not know you a week sooner!—my darling had not then died.'

'God gives and takes away, my lady,' answered Hartley; 'and you must remember that two are restored to you out of three. It is far from certain that the treatment I have used towards the convalescents would have brought through their brother; for the case, as reported to me, was of a very inveterate description.'

'Doctor,' said Witherington, his voice testifying more emotion than he usually or willingly gave way to, 'you can comfort the sick in spirit as well as the sick in body. But it is time we settle our wager. You betted your reputation, which remains with you, increased by all the credit due to your eminent success, against a thousand gold mohurs, the value of which you will find in that pocket-book.'

'General Witherington,' said Hartley, 'you are wealthy, and entitled to be generous—I am poor, and not entitled to decline whatever may be, even in a liberal sense, a compensation for my professional attendance. But there is a bound to extravagance, both in giving and accepting; and I must not hazard the newly acquired reputation with which you flatter me, by giving room to have it said that I fleeced the parents when their feelings were all afloat with anxiety for their children. Allow me to divide this large sum; one half I will thankfully retain, as a most liberal recompense for my labour; and if you still think you owe me anything, let me have it in the advantage of your good opinion and countenance.'

'If I acquiesce in your proposal, Doctor Hartley,' said the general, reluctantly receiving back a part of the contents of the pocket-book, 'it is because I hope to serve you with my interest, even better than with my purse.'

'And indeed, sir,' replied Hartley, 'it was upon your interest that I am just about to make a small claim.'

The general and his lady spoke both in the same breath, to assure him his boon was granted before asked.

'I am not so sure of that,' said Hartley; 'for it respects

a point on which I have heard say, that your Excellency is rather inflexible—the discharge of a recruit.'

'My duty makes me so,' replied the general—'You know the sort of fellows that we are obliged to content ourselves with—they get drunk—grow pot-valiant—enlist overnight, and repent next morning. If I am to dismiss all those who pretend to have been trepanned, we should have few volunteers remain behind. Every one has some idle story of the promises of a swaggering Sergeant Kite—It is impossible to attend to them. But let me hear yours, however.'

'Mine is a very singular case. The party has been robbed of a thousand pounds.'

'A recruit for this service possessing a thousand pounds! My dear doctor, depend upon it, the fellow has gulled you. Bless my heart, would a man who had a thousand pounds think of enlisting as a private sentinel?'

'He had no such thoughts,' answered Hartley. 'He was persuaded by the rogue whom he trusted, that he was to have a commission.'

'Then his friend must have been Tom Hillary, or the devil; for no other could possess so much cunning and impudence. He will certainly find his way to the gallows at last. Still this story of the thousand pounds seems a touch even beyond Tom Hillary. What reason have you to think that this fellow ever had such a sum of money.'

'I have the best reason to know it for certain,' answered Hartley; 'he and I served our time together, under the same excellent master; and when he came of age, not liking the profession which he had studied, and obtaining possession of his little fortune, he was deceived by the promises of this same Hillary.'

'Who has had him locked up in our well-ordered hospital yonder?' said the general.

'Even so, please your Excellency,' replied Hartley; 'not, I think, to cure him of any complaint, but to give him the opportunity of catching one, which would silence all inquiries.'

'The matter shall be closely looked into. But how miserably careless the young man's friends must have been to let a raw lad go into the world with such a companion

and guide as Tom Hillary, and such a sum as a thousand pounds in his pocket. His parents had better have knocked him on the head. It certainly was not done like canny Northumberland, as my servant Winter calls it.'

'The youth must indeed have had strangely hard-hearted or careless parents,' said Mrs. Witherington, in accents of pity.

'He never knew them, madam,' said Hartley; 'there was a mystery on the score of his birth. A cold, unwilling, and almost unknown hand, dealt him out his portion when he came of lawful age, and he was pushed into the world like a bark forced from shore, without rudder, compass, or pilot.'

Here General Witherington involuntarily looked to his lady, while, guided by a similar impulse, her looks were turned upon him. They exchanged a momentary glance of deep and peculiar meaning, and then the eyes of both were fixed on the ground.

'Were you brought up in Scotland?' said the lady, addressing herself, in a faltering voice, to Hartley—'And what was your master's name?'

'I served my apprenticeship with Mr. Gideon Gray of the town of Middlemas,' said Hartley.

'Middlemas! Gray?' repeated the lady, and fainted away.

Hartley offered the succours of his profession; the husband flew to support her head, and the instant that Mrs. Witherington began to recover, he whispered to her, in a tone betwixt entreaty and warning, 'Zilia, beware—beware!'

Some imperfect sounds which she had begun to frame died away upon her tongue.

'Let me assist you to your dressing-room, my love,' said her obviously anxious husband.

She arose with the action of an automaton, which moves at a touch of a spring, and half hanging upon her husband, half-dragging herself on by her own efforts, had nearly reached the door of the room when Hartley, following, asked if he could be of any service.

'No, sir,' said the general sternly; 'this is no case for a stranger's interference; when you are wanted I will send for you.'

Hartley stepped back on receiving a rebuff in a tone so different from that which General Witherington had used towards him in their previous intercourse, and felt disposed, for the first time, to give credit to public report, which assigned to that gentleman, with several good qualities, the character of a very proud and haughty man. Hitherto, he thought, I have seen him tamed by sorrow and anxiety, now the mind is regaining its natural tension. But he must in decency interest himself for this unhappy Middlemas.

The general returned into the apartment a minute or two afterwards, and addressed Hartley in his usual tone of politeness, though apparently still under great embarrassment, which he in vain endeavoured to conceal.

'Mrs. Witherington is better,' he said, 'and will be glad to see you before dinner. You dine with us, I hope?'

Hartley bowed.

'Mrs. Witherington is rather subject to this sort of nervous fits, and she has been much harrassed of late by grief and apprehension. When she recovers from them it is a few minutes before she can collect her ideas, and during such intervals—to speak very confidentially to you, my dear Doctor Hartley—she speaks sometimes about imaginary events which have never happened, and sometimes about distressing occurrences in an early period of life. I am not, therefore, willing that any one but myself, or her old attendant Mrs. Lopez, should be with her on such occasions.'

Hartley admitted that a certain degree of light-headedness was often the consequence of nervous fits.

The general proceeded. 'As to this young man—this friend of yours—this Richard Middlemas—did you not call him so?'

'Not that I recollect,' answered Hartley; 'but your Excellency has hit upon his name.'

'That is odd enough—Certainly you said something about Middlemas?' replied General Witherington.

'I mentioned the name of the town,' said Hartley.

'Aye, and I caught it up as the name of the recruit—I was indeed occupied at the moment by my anxiety about my wife. But this Middlemas, since such is his name, is a wild young fellow, I suppose?'

'I should do him wrong to say so, your Excellency. He

may have had his follies like other young men; but his conduct has, so far as I know, been respectable; but, considering we lived in the same house, we were not very intimate.'

'That is bad—I should have liked him—that is—it would have been happy for him to have had a friend like you. But I suppose you studied too hard for him. He would be a soldier, ha? Is he good-looking?'

'Remarkably so,' replied Hartley; 'and has a very prepossessing manner.'

'Is his complexion dark or fair?' asked the general.

'Rather uncommonly dark,' said Hartley,—'darker, if I may use the freedom, than your Excellency's.'

'Nay, then, he must be a black ouzel, indeed! Does he understand languages?'

'Latin and French tolerably well.'

'Of course he cannot fence or dance?'

'Pardon me, sir, I am no great judge; but Richard is reckoned to do both with uncommon skill.'

'Indeed! Sum this up, and it sounds well. Handsome, accomplished in exercises, moderately learned, perfectly well-bred, not unreasonably wild. All this comes too high for the situation of a private sentinel. He must have a commission, Doctor—entirely for your sake.'

'Your Excellency is generous.'

'It shall be so; and I will find means to make Tom Hillary disgorge his plunder, unless he prefers being hanged, a fate he has long deserved. You cannot go back to the hospital to-day. You dine with us, and you know Mrs. Witherington's fears of infection; but to-morrow find out your friend. Winter shall see him equipped with everything needful. Tom Hillary shall repay advances, you know; and he must be off with the first detachment of the recruits, in the *Middlesex* Indiaman, which sails from the Downs on Monday fortnight; that is, if you think him fit for the voyage. I dare say the poor fellow is sick of the Isle of Wight.'

'Your Excellency will permit the young man to pay his respects to you before his departure?'

'To what purpose, sir?' said the general hastily and peremptorily; but instantly added, 'You are right—I

should like to see him. Winter shall let him know the time, and take horses to fetch him hither. But he must have been out of the hospital for a day or two ; so the sooner you can set him at liberty the better. In the meantime, take him to your own lodgings, Doctor ; and do not let him form any intimacies with the officers, or any others, in this place, where he may light on another Hillary.'

Had Hartley been as well acquainted as the reader with the circumstances of young Middlemas's birth, he might have drawn decisive conclusions from the behaviour of General Witherington, while his comrade was the topic of conversation. But as Mr. Gray and Middlemas himself were both silent on the subject, he knew little of it but from general report, which his curiosity had never induced him to scrutinize minutely. Nevertheless, what he did apprehend interested him so much, that he resolved upon trying a little experiment in which he thought there could be no great harm. He placed on his finger the remarkable ring entrusted to his care by Richard Middlemas, and endeavoured to make it conspicuous in approaching Mrs. Witherington ; taking care, however, that this occurred during her husband's absence. Her eyes had no sooner caught a sight of the gem, than they became riveted to it, and she begged a nearer sight of it, as strongly resembling one which she had given to a friend. Taking the ring from his finger, and placing it in her emaciated hand, Hartley informed her it was the property of the friend in whom he had just been endeavouring to interest the general. Mrs. Witherington retired in great emotion, but next day summoned Hartley to a private interview, the particulars of which, so far as are necessary to be known, shall be afterwards related.

On the succeeding day after these important discoveries, Middlemas, to his great delight, was rescued from his seclusion in the hospital, and transferred to his comrade's lodgings in the town of Ryde, of which Hartley himself was a rare inmate ; the anxiety of Mrs. Witherington detaining him at the general's house long after his medical attendance might have been dispensed with.

Within two or three days a commission arrived for Richard Middlemas, as a lieutenant in the service of the

East India Company. Winter, by his master's orders, put the wardrobe of the young officer on a suitable footing; while Middlemas, enchanted at finding himself at once emancipated from his late dreadful difficulties, and placed under the protection of a man of such importance as the general, obeyed implicitly the hints transmitted to him by Hartley and enforced by Winter, and abstained from going into public, or forming acquaintances with any one. Even Hartley himself he saw seldom; and, deep as were his obligations, he did not perhaps greatly regret the absence of one whose presence always affected him with a sense of humiliation and abasement.

CHAPTER VIII

The evening before he was to sail for the Downs, where the *Middlesex* lay ready to weigh anchor, the new lieutenant was summoned by Winter to attend him to the general's residence, for the purpose of being introduced to his patron, to thank him at once, and to bid him farewell. On the road, the old man took the liberty of schooling his companion concerning the respect which he ought to pay to his master, 'who was, though a kind and generous man as ever came from Northumberland, extremely rigid in punctiliously exacting the degree of honour which was his due.'

While they were advancing towards the house, the general and his wife expected their arrival with breathless anxiety. They were seated in a superb drawing-room, the general behind a large chandelier, which, shaded opposite to his face, threw all the light to the other side of the table, so that he could observe any person placed there without becoming the subject of observation in turn. On a heap of cushions, wrapped in a glittering drapery of gold and silver muslins, mingled with shawls, a luxury which was then a novelty in Europe, sat, or rather reclined, his lady, who, past the full meridian of beauty, retained charms enough to distinguish her as one who had been formerly a very fine woman, though her mind seemed occupied by the deepest emotion.

'Zilia,' said her husband, 'you are unable for what you have undertaken—take my advice—retire—you shall know all and everything that passes—but retire. To what purpose should you cling to the idle wish of beholding for a moment a being whom you can never again look upon?'

'Alas,' answered the lady, 'and is not your declaration that I shall never see him more, a sufficient reason that I should wish to see him now—should wish to imprint on my memory the features and the form which I am never again to behold while we are in the body? Do not, my Richard, be more cruel than was my poor father, even when his wrath was in its bitterness. He let me look upon my infant, and its cherub face dwelt with me, and was my comfort among the years of unutterable sorrow in which my youth wore away.'

'It is enough, Zilia—you have desired this boon—I have granted it—and, at whatever risk, my promise shall be kept. But think how much depends on this fatal secret—your rank and estimation in society—my honour interested that that estimation should remain uninjured. Zilia, the moment that the promulgation of such a secret gives prudes and scandal-mongers a right to treat you with scorn, will be fraught with unutterable misery, perhaps with bloodshed and death, should a man dare to take up the rumour.'

'You shall be obeyed, my husband,' answered Zilia, 'in all that the frailness of nature will permit. But oh, God of my fathers, of what clay hast thou fashioned us poor mortals, who dread so much the shame which follows sin, yet repent so little for the sin itself!' In a minute afterwards steps were heard—the door opened—Winter announced Lieutenant Middlemas, and the unconscious son stood before his parents.

Witherington started involuntarily up, but immediately constrained himself to assume the easy deportment with which a superior receives a dependent, and which, in his own case, was usually mingled with a certain degree of hauteur. The mother had less command of herself. She, too, sprang up, as if with the intention of throwing herself on the neck of her son, for whom she had travailed and sorrowed. But the warning glance of her husband arrested

her as if by magic, and she remained standing, with her beautiful head and neck somewhat advanced, her hands clasped together, and extended forward in the attitude of motion, but motionless, nevertheless, as a marble statue, to which the sculptor has given all the appearance of life but cannot impart its powers. So strange a gesture and posture might have excited the young officer's surprise; but the lady stood in the shade, and he was so intent in looking upon his patron, that he was scarce even conscious of Mrs. Witherington's presence.

'I am happy in this opportunity,' said Middlemas, observing that the general did not speak, 'to return my thanks to General Witherington, to whom they never can be sufficiently paid.'

The sound of his voice, though uttering words so indifferent, seemed to dissolve the charm which kept his mother motionless. She sighed deeply, relaxed the rigidity of her posture, and sank back on the cushions from which she had started up. Middlemas turned a look towards her at the sound of the sigh, and the rustling of her drapery. The general hastened to speak.

'My wife, Mr. Middlemas, has been unwell of late—your friend, Mr. Hartley, might mention it to you—an affection of the nerves.'

Mr. Middlemas, was, of course, sorry and concerned.

'We have had distress in our family, Mr. Middlemas, from the ultimate and heart-breaking consequences of which we have escaped by the skill of your friend, Mr. Hartley. We will be happy if it is in our power to repay a part of our obligations in services to his friend and protégé, Mr. Middlemas.'

'I am only acknowledged as *his* protégé, then,' *thought* Richard; but he *said*, 'Every one must envy his friend in having had the distinguished good fortune to be of use to General Witherington and his family.'

'You have received your commission, I presume. Have you any particular wish or desire respecting your destination?'

'No, may it please your Excellency,' answered Middlemas. 'I suppose Hartley would tell your Excellency my unhappy state—that I am an orphan, deserted by the parents who cast me on the wide world, an outcast about

whom nobody knows or cares, except to desire that I should wander far enough, and live obscurely enough, not to disgrace them by their connexion with me.'

Zilia wrung her hands as he spoke, and drew her muslin veil closely around her head as if to exclude the sounds which excited her mental agony.

'Mr. Hartley was not particularly communicative about your affairs,' said the general; 'nor do I wish to give you the pain of entering into them. What I desire to know is, if you are pleased with your destination to Madras?'

'Perfectly, please your Excellency—anywhere, so that there is no chance of meeting the villain Hillary.'

'Oh! Hillary's services are too necessary in the purlieus of St. Giles's, the Lowlights of Newcastle, and suchlike places, where human carrion can be picked up, to be permitted to go to India. However, to show you the knave has some grace, there are the notes of which you were robbed. You will find them the very same paper which you lost, except a small sum which the rogue had spent, but which a friend has made up, in compassion for your sufferings.' Richard Middlemas sank on one knee, and kissed the hand which restored him to independence.

'Pshaw!' said the general, 'you are a silly young man;' but he withdrew not his hand from his caresses. This was one of the occasions on which Dick Middlemas could be oratorical.

'O, my more than father,' he said, 'how much greater a debt do I owe to you than to the unnatural parents who brought me into this world by their sin, and deserted me through their cruelty!'

Zilia, as she heard these cutting words, flung back her veil, raising it on both hands till it floated behind her like a mist, and then giving a faint groan, sank down in a swoon. Pushing Middlemas from him with a hasty movement, General Witherington flew to his lady's assistance, and carried her in his arms, as if she had been a child, into the anteroom, where an old servant waited with the means of restoring suspended animation, which the unhappy husband too truly anticipated might be useful. These were hastily employed, and succeeded in calling the sufferer to life, but in a state of mental emotion that was dreadful.

Her mind was obviously impressed by the last words which her son had uttered.—'Did you hear him, Richard,' she exclaimed, in accents terribly loud, considering the exhausted state of her strength—'Did you hear the words? It was Heaven speaking our condemnation by the voice of our own child. But do not fear, my Richard, do not weep! I will answer the thunder of Heaven with its own music.'

She flew to a harpsichord which stood in the room, and, while the servant and master gazed on each other, as if doubting whether her senses were about to leave her entirely, she wandered over the keys, producing a wilderness of harmony, composed of passages recalled by memory, or combined by her own musical talent, until at length her voice and instrument united in one of those magnificent hymns in which her youth had praised her Maker, with voice and harp, like the Royal Hebrew who composed it. The tear ebbed insensibly from the eyes which she turned upwards—her vocal tones, combining with those of the instrument, rose to a pitch of brilliancy seldom attained by the most distinguished performers, and then sank into a dying cadence, which fell, never again to rise,—for the songstress had died with her strain.

The horror of the distracted husband may be conceived, when all efforts to restore life proved totally ineffectual. Servants were dispatched for medical men—Hartley, and every other who could be found. The general precipitated himself into the apartment they had so lately left, and in his haste ran against Middlemas, who, at the sound of the music from the adjoining apartment, had naturally approached nearer to the door, and surprised and startled by the sort of clamour, hasty steps, and confused voices which ensued, had remained standing there, endeavouring to ascertain the cause of so much disorder.

The sight of the unfortunate young man wakened the general's stormy passions to frenzy. He seemed to recognize his son only as the cause of his wife's death. He seized him by the collar, and shook him violently as he dragged him into the chamber of mortality.

'Come hither,' he said, 'thou for whom a life of lowest obscurity was too mean a fate—come hither, and look on

the parents whom thou hast so much envied—whom thou hast so often cursed. Look at that pale emaciated form, a figure of wax, rather than flesh and blood—that is thy mother—that is the unhappy Zilia Monçada, to whom thy birth was the source of shame and misery, and to whom thy ill-omened presence has now brought death itself. And behold me '—he pushed the lad from him, and stood up erect, looking wellnigh in gesture and figure the apostate spirit he described—' Behold me '—he said ; ' see you not my hair streaming with sulphur, my brow scathed with lightning ? I am the arch-fiend—I am the father whom you seek—I am the accursed Richard Tresham, the seducer of Zilia, and the father of her murderer ! '

Hartley entered while this horrid scene was passing. All attention to the deceased, he instantly saw, would be thrown away ; and understanding, partly from Winter, partly from the tenor of the general's frantic discourse, the nature of the disclosure which had occurred, he hastened to put an end, if possible, to the frightful and scandalous scene which had taken place. Aware how delicately the general felt on the subject of reputation, he assailed him with remonstrances on such conduct, in presence of so many witnesses. But the mind had ceased to answer to that once powerful key-note.

' I care not if the whole world hear my sin and my punishment,' said Witherington. ' It shall not be again said of me that I fear shame more than I repent sin. I feared shame only for Zilia, and Zilia is dead ! '

' But her memory, General—spare the memory of your wife, in which the character of your children is involved.'

' I have no children ! ' said the desperate and violent man. ' My Reuben is gone to Heaven, to prepare a lodging for the angel who has now escaped from earth in a flood of harmony, which can only be equalled where she is gone. The other two cherubs will not survive their mother. I shall be, nay, I already feel myself, a childless man.'

' Yet I am your son,' replied Middlemas, in a tone sorrowful, but at the same time tinged with sullen resentment—' Your son by your wedded wife. Pale as she lies there, I call upon you both to acknowledge my rights, and all who are present to bear witness to them.'

'Wretch!' exclaimed the maniac father, 'canst thou think of thine own sordid rights in the midst of death and frenzy? My son! thou art the fiend who has occasioned my wretchedness in this world, and who will share my eternal misery in the next. Hence from my sight, and my curse go with thee!'

His eyes fixed on the ground, his arms folded on his breast, the haughty and dogged spirit of Middlemas yet seemed to meditate reply. But Hartley, Winter, and other bystanders interfered, and forced him from the apartment. As they endeavoured to remonstrate with him, he twisted himself out of their grasp, ran to the stables, and seizing the first saddled horse that he found, out of many that had been in haste got ready to seek for assistance, he threw himself on its back, and rode furiously off. Hartley was about to mount and follow him; but Winter and the other domestics threw themselves around him, and implored him not to desert their unfortunate master, at a time when the influence which he had acquired over him might be the only restraint on the violence of his passions.

'He had a *coup de soleil* in India,' whispered Winter, 'and is capable of anything in his fits. These cowards cannot control him, and I am old and feeble.'

Satisfied that General Witherington was a greater object of compassion than Middlemas, whom besides he had no hope of overtaking, and who he believed was safe in his own keeping, however violent might be his present emotions, Hartley returned where the greater emergency demanded his immediate care.

He found the unfortunate general contending with the domestics, who endeavoured to prevent his making his way to the apartment where his children slept, and exclaiming furiously—'Rejoice, my treasures—rejoice!—He has fled, who would proclaim your father's crime, and your mother's dishonour! He has fled, never to return, whose life has been the death of one parent, and the ruin of another! Courage, my children, your father is with you—he will make his way to you through a hundred obstacles!'

The domestics, intimidated and undecided, were giving way to him, when Adam Hartley approached, and placing himself before the unhappy man, fixed his eye firmly on

the general's, while he said in a low but stern voice—'Madman, would you kill your children?'

The general seemed staggered in his resolution, but still attempted to rush past him. But Hartley, seizing him by the collar of his coat on each side, 'You are my prisoner,' he said; 'I command you to follow me.'

'Ha! prisoner, and for high treason? Dog, thou hast met thy death!'

The distracted man drew a poniard from his bosom, and Hartley's strength and resolution might not perhaps have saved his life, had not Winter mastered the general's right hand, and contrived to disarm him.

'I am your prisoner, then,' he said; 'use me civilly—and let me see my wife and children.'

'You shall see them to-morrow,' said Hartley; 'follow us instantly, and without the least resistance.'

General Witherington followed like a child, with the air of one who is suffering for a cause in which he glories.

'I am not ashamed of my principles,' he said—'I am willing to die for my king.'

Without exciting his frenzy, by contradicting the fantastic idea which occupied his imagination, Hartley continued to maintain over his patient the ascendancy he had acquired. He caused him to be led to his apartment, and beheld him suffer himself to be put to bed. Administering then a strong composing draught, and causing a servant to sleep in the room, he watched the unfortunate man till dawn of morning.

General Witherington awoke in his full senses, and apparently conscious of his real situation, which he testified by low groans, sobs, and tears. When Hartley drew near his bedside, he knew him perfectly, and said, 'Do not fear me—the fit is over—leave me now, and see after yonder unfortunate. Let him leave Britain as soon as possible, and go where his fate calls him, and where we can never meet more. Winter knows my ways, and will take care of me.'

Winter gave the same advice. 'I can answer,' he said, 'for my master's security at present; but in Heaven's name, prevent his ever meeting again with that obdurate young man!'

CHAPTER IX

Well, then, the world's mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open.
Merry Wives of Windsor.

When Adam Hartley arrived at his lodgings in the sweet little town of Ryde, his first inquiries were after his comrade. He had arrived last night late, man and horse all in a foam. He made no reply to any questions about supper or the like, but snatching a candle, ran upstairs into his apartment, and shut and double-locked the door. The servants only supposed, that, being something intoxicated, he had ridden hard, and was unwilling to expose himself.

Hartley went to the door of his chamber, not without some apprehensions; and after knocking and calling more than once, received at length the welcome return, 'Who is there?'

On Hartley announcing himself, the door opened, and Middlemas appeared, well dressed, and with his hair arranged and powdered; although, from the appearance of the bed, it had not been slept in on the preceding night, and Richard's countenance, haggard and ghastly, seemed to bear witness to the same fact. It was, however, with an affectation of indifference that he spoke.

'I congratulate you on your improvement in worldly knowledge, Adam. It is just the time to desert the poor heir, and to stick by him that is in immediate possession of the wealth.'

'I stayed last night at General Witherington's,' answered Hartley, 'because he is extremely ill.'

'Tell him to repent of his sins, then,' said Richard. 'Old Gray used to say a doctor had as good a title to give ghostly advice as a parson. Do you remember Doctor Dulberry, the minister, calling him an interloper? Ha! Ha! Ha!'

'I am surprised at this style of language from one in your circumstances.'

'Why, aye,' said Middlemas, with a bitter smile—'it would be difficult to most men to keep up their spirits after

gaining and losing father, mother, and a good inheritance, all in the same day. But I had always a turn for philosophy.'

'I really do not understand you, Mr. Middlemas.'

'Why, I found my parents yesterday, did I not?' answered the young man. 'My mother, as you know, had waited but that moment to die, and my father to become distracted; and I conclude both were contrived purposely to cheat me of my inheritance, as he has taken up such a prejudice against me.'

'Inheritance?' repeated Hartley, bewildered by Richard's calmness, and half suspecting that the insanity of the father was hereditary in the family. 'In Heaven's name, recollect yourself, and get rid of these hallucinations. What inheritance are you dreaming of?'

'That of my mother, to be sure, who must have inherited old Monçada's wealth—and to whom should it descend, save to her children? I am the eldest of them—that fact cannot be denied.'

'But consider, Richard—recollect yourself.'

'I do,' said Richard; 'and what then?'

'Then you cannot but remember,' said Hartley, 'that unless there was a will in your favour, your birth prevents you from inheriting.'

'You are mistaken, sir, I am legitimate. Yonder sickly brats, whom you rescued from the grave, are not more legitimate than I am. Yes! our parents could not allow the air of Heaven to breathe on them—me they committed to the winds and the waves—I am nevertheless their lawful child, as well as their puling offspring of advanced age and decayed health. I saw them, Adam—Winter showed the nursery to me while they were gathering courage to receive me in the drawing-room. There they lay, the children of predilection, the riches of the East expended that they might sleep soft and wake in magnificence. I, the eldest brother—the heir—I stood beside their bed in the borrowed dress which I had so lately exchanged for the rags of an hospital. Their couches breathed the richest perfumes, while I was reeking from a pest-house; and I—I repeat it—the heir, the produce of their earliest and best love, was thus treated. No wonder that my look was that of a basilisk.'

'You speak as if you were possessed with an evil spirit,' said Hartley; 'or else you labour under a strange delusion.'

'You think those only are legally married over whom a drowsy parson has read the ceremony from a dog's-eared prayer-book? It may be so in your English law—but Scotland makes Love himself the priest. A vow betwixt a fond couple, the blue heaven alone witnessing, will protect a confiding girl against the perjury of a fickle swain, as much as if a dean had performed the rites in the loftiest cathedral in England. Nay, more; if the child of love be acknowledged by the father at the time when he is baptized—if he present the mother to strangers of respectability as his wife, the laws of Scotland will not allow him to retract the justice which has, in these actions, been done to the female whom he has wronged, or the offspring of their mutual love. This General Tresham, or Witherington, treated my unhappy mother as his wife before Gray and others, quartered her as such in the family of a respectable man, gave her the same name by which he himself chose to pass for the time. He presented me to the priest as his lawful offspring; and the law of Scotland, benevolent to the helpless child, will not allow him now to disown what he so formally admitted. I know my rights, and am determined to claim them.'

'You do not then intend to go on board the *Middlesex?* Think a little—You will lose your voyage and your commission.'

'I will save my birthright,' answered Middlemas. 'When I thought of going to India, I knew not my parents, or how to make good the rights which I had through them. That riddle is solved. I am entitled to at least a third of Monçada's estate, which, by Winter's account, is considerable. But for you, and your mode of treating the small-pox, I should have had the whole. Little did I think, when old Gray was likely to have his wig pulled off for putting out fires, throwing open windows, and exploding whisky and water, that the new system of treating the small-pox was to cost me so many thousand pounds.'

'You are determined then,' said Hartley, 'on this wild course?'

'I know my rights, and am determined to make them available,' answered the obstinate youth.

'Mr. Richard Middlemas, I am sorry for you.'

'Mr. Adam Hartley, I beg to know why I am honoured by your sorrow.'

'I pity you,' answered Hartley, 'both for the obstinacy of selfishness, which can think of wealth after the scene you saw last night, and for the idle vision which leads you to believe that you can obtain possession of it.'

'Selfish!' cried Middlemas; 'why, I am a dutiful son, labouring to clear the memory of a calumniated mother—And am I a visionary? Why, it was to this hope that I awakened, when old Monçada's letter to Gray, devoting me to perpetual obscurity, first roused me to a sense of my situation, and dispelled the dreams of my childhood. Do you think that I would ever have submitted to the drudgery which I shared with you, but that, by doing so, I kept in view the only traces of these unnatural parents, by means of which I proposed to introduce myself to their notice, and, if necessary, enforce the rights of a legitimate child? The silence and death of Monçada broke my plans, and it was then only I reconciled myself to the thoughts of India.'

'You were very young to have known so much of the Scottish law, at the time when we were first acquainted,' said Hartley. 'But I can guess your instructor.'

'No less authority than Tom Hillary's,' replied Middlemas. 'His good counsel on that head is a reason why I do not now prosecute him to the gallows.'

'I judged as much,' replied Hartley; 'for I heard him, before I left Middlemas, debating the point with Mr. Lawford; and I recollect perfectly, that he stated the law to be such as you now lay down.'

'And what said Lawford in answer?' demanded Middlemas.

'He admitted,' replied Hartley, 'that in circumstances where the case was doubtful, such presumptions of legitimacy might be admitted. But he said they were liable to be controlled by positive and precise testimony, as, for instance, the evidence of the mother declaring the illegitimacy of the child.'

'But there can exist none such in my case,' said Middlemas hastily, and with marks of alarm.

'I will not deceive you, Mr. Middlemas, though I fear I cannot help giving you pain. I had yesterday a long conference with your mother, Mrs. Witherington, in which she acknowledged you as her son, but a son born before marriage. This express declaration will, therefore, put an end to the suppositions on which you ground your hopes. If you please, you may hear the contents of her declaration, which I have in her own handwriting.'

'Confusion! is the cup to be for ever dashed from my lips?' muttered Richard; but recovering his composure, by exertion of the self-command of which he possessed so large a portion, he desired Hartley to proceed with his communication. Hartley accordingly proceeded to inform him of the particulars preceding his birth, and those which followed after it; while Middlemas, seated on a sea-chest, listened with inimitable composure to a tale which went to root up the flourishing hopes of wealth which he had lately so fondly entertained.

Zilia Monçada was the only child of a Portuguese Jew of great wealth, who had come to London, in prosecution of his commerce. Among the few Christians who frequented his house, and occasionally his table, was Richard Tresham, a gentleman of a high Northumbrian family, deeply engaged in the service of Charles Edward during his short invasion, and though holding a commission in the Portuguese service, still an object of suspicion to the British government, on account of his well-known courage and Jacobitical principles. The high-bred elegance of this gentleman, together with his complete acquaintance with the Portuguese language and manners, had won the intimacy of old Monçada, and, alas! the heart of the inexperienced Zilia, who, beautiful as an angel, had as little knowledge of the world and its wickedness as the lamb that is but a week old.

Tresham made his proposals to Monçada, perhaps in a manner which too evidently showed that he conceived the high-born Christian was degrading himself in asking an alliance with the wealthy Jew. Monçada rejected his proposals, forbade him his house, but could not prevent the lovers from meeting in private. Tresham made a dishonourable

use of the opportunities which the poor Zilia so incautiously afforded, and the consequence was her ruin. The lover, however, had every purpose of righting the injury which he had inflicted, and, after various plans of secret marriage, which were rendered abortive by the difference of religion, and other circumstances, flight for Scotland was determined on. The hurry of the journey, the fear and anxiety to which Zilia was subject, brought on her confinement several weeks before the usual time, so that they were compelled to accept of the assistance and accommodation offered by Mr. Gray. They had not been there many hours ere Tresham heard, by the medium of some sharp-sighted or keen-eared friend, that there were warrants out against him for treasonable practices. His correspondence with Charles Edward had become known to Monçada during the period of their friendship; he betrayed it in vengeance to the British cabinet, and warrants were issued, in which, at Monçada's request, his daughter's name was included. This might be of use, he apprehended, to enable him to separate his daughter from Tresham, should he find the fugitives actually married. How far he succeeded, the reader already knows, as well as the precautions which he took to prevent the living evidence of his child's frailty from being known to exist. His daughter he carried with him, and subjected her to severe restraint, which her own reflections rendered doubly bitter. It would have completed his revenge, had the author of Zilia's misfortunes been brought to the scaffold for his political offences. But Tresham skulked among friends in the Highlands, and escaped until the affair blew over.

He afterwards entered into the East India Company's service, under his mother's name of Witherington, which concealed the Jacobite and rebel, until these terms were forgotten. His skill in military affairs soon raised him to riches and eminence. When he returned to Britain, his first inquiries were after the family of Monçada. His fame, his wealth, and the late conviction that his daughter never would marry any but him who had her first love, induced the old man to give that encouragement to General Witherington, which he had always denied to the poor and outlawed Major Tresham; and the lovers, after

having been fourteen years separated, were at length united in wedlock.

General Witherington eagerly concurred in the earnest wish of his father-in-law, that every remembrance of former events should be buried, by leaving the fruit of the early and unhappy intrigue suitably provided for, but in a distant and obscure situation. Zilia thought far otherwise. Her heart longed, with a mother's longing, towards the object of her first maternal tenderness, but she dared not place herself in opposition at once to the will of her father, and the decision of her husband. The former, his religious prejudices much effaced by his long residence in England, had given consent that she should conform to the established religion of her husband and her country,—the latter, haughty as we have described him, made it his pride to introduce the beautiful convert among his high-born kindred. The discovery of her former frailty would have proved a blow to her respectability, which he dreaded like death; and it could not long remain a secret from his wife that in consequence of a severe illness in India, even his reason became occasionally shaken by anything which violently agitated his feelings. She had, therefore, acquiesced in patience and silence in the course of policy which Monçada had devised, and which her husband anxiously and warmly approved. Yet her thoughts, even when their marriage was blessed with other offspring, anxiously reverted to the banished and outcast child who had first been clasped to the maternal bosom.

All these feelings, 'subdued and cherished long,' were set afloat in full tide by the unexpected discovery of this son, redeemed from a lot of extreme misery, and placed before his mother's imagination in circumstances so disastrous.

It was in vain that her husband had assured her that he would secure the young man's prosperity, by his purse and his interest. She could not be satisfied, until she had herself done something to alleviate the doom of banishment to which her eldest-born was thus condemned. She was the more eager to do so, as she felt the extreme delicacy of her health, which was undermined by so many years of secret suffering.

Mrs. Witherington was, in conferring her maternal

bounty, naturally led to employ the agency of Hartley, the companion of her son, and to whom, since the recovery of her younger children, she almost looked up as to a tutelar deity. She placed in his hands a sum of £2,000, which she had at her own unchallenged disposal, with a request, uttered in the fondest and most affectionate terms, that it might be applied to the service of Richard Middlemas in the way Hartley should think most useful to him. She assured him of further support, as it should be needed; and a note to the following purport was also intrusted him, to be delivered when and where the prudence of Hartley should judge it proper to confide to him the secret of his birth.

'Oh, Benoni! Oh, child of my sorrow!' said this interesting document, 'why should the eyes of thy unhappy mother be about to obtain permission to look on thee, since her arms were denied the right to fold thee to her bosom? May the God of Jews and of Gentiles watch over thee, and guard thee! May he remove, in his good time, the darkness which rolls between me and the beloved of my heart—the first fruit of my unhappy, nay, unhallowed affection. Do not—do not, my beloved!—think thyself a lonely exile, while thy mother's prayers arise for thee at sunrise and at sunset, to call down every blessing on thy head—to invoke every power in thy protection and defence. Seek not to see me—Oh, why must I say so! But let me humble myself in the dust since it is my own sin, my own folly, which I must blame!—but seek not to see or speak with me—it might be the death of both. Confide thy thoughts to the excellent Hartley, who hath been the guardian angel of us all—even as the tribes of Israel had each their guardian angel. What thou shalt wish, and he shall advise in thy behalf, shall be done, if in the power of a mother—And the love of a mother! Is it bounded by seas, or can deserts and distance measure its limits? Oh, child of my sorrow! Oh, Benoni! let thy spirit be with mine, as mine is with thee.'

'Z. M.'

All these arrangements being completed, the unfortunate

lady next insisted with her husband that she should be permitted to see her son in that parting interview which terminated so fatally. Hartley, therefore, now discharged as her executor, the duty entrusted to him as her confidential agent.

'Surely,' he thought, as, having finished his communication, he was about to leave the apartment, 'surely the demons of Ambition and Avarice will unclose the talons which they have fixed upon this man, at a charm like this.'

And indeed Richard's heart had been formed of the nether millstone, had he not been duly affected by these first and last tokens of his mother's affection. He leant his head upon a table, and his tears flowed plentifully. Hartley left him undisturbed for more than an hour, and on his return found him in nearly the same attitude in which he had left him.

'I regret to disturb you at this moment,' he said, 'but I have still a part of my duty to discharge. I must place in your possession the deposit which your mother made in my hands—and I must also remind you that time flies fast, and that you have scarce an hour or two to determine whether you will prosecute your Indian voyage, under the new view of circumstances which I have opened to you.'

Middlemas took the bills which his mother had bequeathed him. As he raised his head, Hartley could observe that his face was stained with tears. Yet he counted over the money with mercantile accuracy; and though he assumed the pen for the purpose of writing a discharge with an air of inconsolable dejection, yet he drew it up in good set terms, like one who had his senses much at his command.

'And now,' he said in a mournful voice, 'give me my mother's narrative.'

Hartley almost started, and answered hastily, 'You have the poor lady's letter, which was addressed to yourself—the narrative is addressed to me. It is my warrant for disposing of a large sum of money—it concerns the rights of third parties, and I cannot part with it.'

'Surely, surely it were better to deliver it into my hands, were it but to weep over it,' answered Middlemas. 'My

fortune, Hartley, has been very cruel. You see that my parents purposed to have made me their undoubted heir; yet their purpose was disappointed by accident. And now my mother comes with well-intended fondness, and while she means to advance my fortune, furnishes evidence to destroy it. Come, come, Hartley—you must be conscious that my mother wrote those details entirely for my information. I am the rightful owner, and insist on having them.'

'I am sorry I must insist on refusing your demand,' answered Hartley, putting the papers in his pocket. 'You ought to consider that, if this communication has destroyed the idle and groundless hopes which you have indulged in, it has, at the same time, more than trebled your capital; and that if there are some hundreds or thousands in the world richer than yourself, there are many millions not half so well provided. Set a brave spirit, then, against your fortune, and do not doubt your success in life.'

His words seemed to sink into the gloomy mind of Middlemas. He stood silent for a moment, and then answered with a reluctant and insinuating voice,—

'My dear Hartley, we have long been companions—you can have neither pleasure nor interest in ruining my hopes—you may find some in forwarding them. Monçada's fortune will enable me to allow five thousand pounds to the friend who should aid me in my difficulties.'

'Good morning to you, Mr. Middlemas,' said Hartley, endeavouring to withdraw.

'One moment—one moment,' said Middlemas, holding his friend by the button at the same time, 'I meant to say ten thousand—and—and—marry whomsoever you like—I will not be your hindrance.'

'You are a villain!' said Hartley, breaking from him, 'and I always thought you so.'

'And you,' answered Middlemas, 'are a fool, and I never thought you better. Off he goes—Let him—the game has been played and lost—I must hedge my bets: India must be my back-play.'

All was in readiness for his departure. A small vessel and a favouring gale conveyed him and several other military gentlemen to the Downs, where the Indiaman,

which was to transport them from Europe, lay ready for their reception.

His first feelings were sufficiently disconsolate. But accustomed from his infancy to conceal his internal thoughts, he appeared in the course of a week the gayest and best bred passenger who ever dared the long and weary space betwixt Old England and her Indian possessions. At Madras, where the sociable feelings of the resident inhabitants give ready way to enthusiasm in behalf of any stranger of agreeable qualities, he experienced that warm hospitality which distinguishes the British character in the East.

Middlemas was well received in company, and in the way of becoming an indispensable guest at every entertainment in the place, when the vessel, on board of which Hartley acted as surgeon's mate, arrived at the same settlement. The latter would not, from his situation, have been entitled to expect much civility and attention; but this disadvantage was made up by his possessing the most powerful introductions from General Witherington, and from other persons of weight in Leadenhall Street, the general's friends, to the principal inhabitants in the settlement. He found himself once more, therefore, moving in the same sphere with Middlemas, and under the alternative of living with him on decent and distant terms, or of breaking off with him altogether.

The first of these courses might perhaps have been the wisest; but the other was most congenial to the blunt and plain character of Hartley, who saw neither propriety nor comfort in maintaining a show of friendly intercourse, to conceal hate, contempt and mutual dislike.

The circle at Fort St. George was much more restricted at that time than it has been since. The coldness of the young men did not escape notice; it transpired that they had been once intimates and fellow-students; yet it was now found that they hesitated at accepting invitations to the same parties. Rumour assigned many different and incompatible reasons for this deadly breach, to which Hartley gave no attention whatever, while Lieutenant Middlemas took care to countenance those which represented the cause of the quarrel most favourably to himself.

'A little bit of rivalry had taken place,' he said, when pressed by gentlemen for an explanation; 'he had only had the good luck to get further in the good graces of a fair lady than his friend Hartley, who had made a quarrel of it, as they saw. He thought it very silly to keep up spleen at such a distance of time and space. He was sorry, more for the sake of the strangeness of the appearance of the thing than anything else, although his friend had really some very good points about him.'

While these whispers were working their effect in society, they did not prevent Hartley from receiving the most flattering assurances of encouragement and official promotion from the Madras government as opportunity should arise. Soon after, it was intimated to him that a medical appointment of a lucrative nature in a remote settlement was conferred on him, which removed him for some time from Madras and its neighbourhood.

Hartley accordingly sailed on his distant expedition; and it was observed that after his departure, the character of Middlemas, as if some check had been removed, began to display itself in disagreeable colours. It was noticed that this young man, whose manners were so agreeable and so courteous during the first months after his arrival in India, began now to show symptoms of a haughty and overbearing spirit. He had adopted, for reasons which the reader may conjecture, but which appeared to be mere whim at Fort St. George, the name of Tresham, in addition to that by which he had hitherto been distinguished, and in this he persisted with an obstinacy which belonged more to the pride than the craft of his character. The lieutenant-colonel of the regiment, an old cross-tempered martinet, did not choose to indulge the captain (such was now the rank of Middlemas) in this humour.

'He knew no officer,' he said, 'by any name save that which he bore in his commission,' and he Middlemas'd the captain on all occasions.

One fatal evening, the captain was so much provoked as to intimate peremptorily 'that he knew his own name best.'

'Why, Captain Middlemas,' replied the colonel, 'it is not every child that knows its own father, so how can every man be so sure of his own name?'

The bow was drawn at a venture, but the shaft found the rent in the armour, and stung deeply. In spite of all the interposition which could be attempted, Middlemas insisted on challenging the colonel, who could be persuaded to no apology.

'If Captain Middlemas,' he said, 'thought the cap fitted, he was welcome to wear it.'

The result was a meeting, in which, after the parties had exchanged shots, the seconds tendered their mediation. It was rejected by Middlemas, who, at the second fire, had the misfortune to kill his commanding officer. In consequence, he was obliged to fly from the British settlements; for, being universally blamed for having pushed the quarrel to extremity, there was little doubt that the whole severity of military discipline would be exercised upon the delinquent. Middlemas, therefore, vanished from Fort St. George, and, though the affair had made much noise at the time, was soon no longer talked of. It was understood, in general, that he had gone to seek that fortune at the court of some native prince which he could no longer hope for in the British settlements.

CHAPTER X

THREE years passed away after the fatal rencounter mentioned in the last chapter, and Doctor Hartley, returning from his appointed mission, which was only temporary, received encouragement to settle in Madras in a medical capacity; and, upon having done so, soon had reason to think he had chosen a line in which he might rise to wealth and reputation. His practice was not confined to his countrymen, but much sought after among the natives, who, whatever may be their prejudices against the Europeans in other respects, universally esteem their superior powers in the medical profession. This lucrative branch of practice rendered it necessary that Hartley should make the Oriental languages his study, in order to hold communication with his patients without the intervention of an interpreter. He had enough of opportunities to

practise as a linguist, for, in acknowledgement, as he used jocularly to say, of the large fees of the wealthy Moslemah and Hindus, he attended the poor of all nations gratis, whenever he was called upon.

It so chanced that one evening he was hastily summoned by a message from the secretary of the government, to attend a patient of consequence. 'Yet he is, after all, only a fakir,' said the message. 'You will find him at the tomb of Cara Razi, the Mohammedan saint and doctor, about one coss from the fort. Inquire for him by the name of Barak el Hadji. Such a patient promises no fees; but we know how little you care about the pagodas; and, besides, the government is your paymaster on this occasion.'

'That is the last matter to be thought on,' said Hartley, and instantly repaired in his palanquin to the place pointed out to him.

The tomb of the Owliah or Mohammedan saint, Cara Razi, was a place held in much reverence by every good Mussulman. It was situated in the centre of a grove of mangoes and tamarind-trees, and was built of red stone, having three domes, and minarets at every corner. There was a court in front, as usual, around which were cells constructed for the accommodation of the fakirs who visited the tomb from motives of devotion, and made a longer or shorter residence there as they thought proper, subsisting upon the alms which the Faithful never fail to bestow on them in exchange for the benefit of their prayers. These devotees were engaged day and night in reading verses of the Koran before the tomb, which was constructed of white marble inscribed with sentences from the book of the Prophet, and with the various titles conferred by the Koran upon the Supreme Being. Such a sepulchre, of which there are many, is, with its appendages and attendants, respected during wars and revolutions, and no less by Feringis (Franks, that is) and Hindus, than by Mohammedans themselves. The fakirs, in return, act as spies for all parties, and are often employed in secret missions of importance.

Complying with the Mohammedan custom, our friend Hartley laid aside his shoes at the gates of the holy precincts, and avoiding to give offence by approaching near to the

tomb, he went up to the principal mullah, or priest, who was distinguishable by the length of his beard, and the size of the large wooden beads, with which the Mohammedans, like the Catholics, keep register of their prayers. Such a person, venerable by his age, sanctity of character, and his real or supposed contempt of worldly pursuits and enjoyments, is regarded as the head of an establishment of this kind.

The mullah is permitted by his situation to be more communicative with strangers than his younger brethren, who in the present instance remained with their eyes fixed on the Koran, muttering their recitations without noticing the European, or attending to what he said, as he inquired at their superior for Barak el Hadji.

The mullah was seated on the earth, from which he did not arise or show any mark of reverence; nor did he interrupt the tale of his beads, which he continued to count assiduously while Hartley was speaking. When he finished, the old man raised his eyes, and looking at him with an air of distraction, as if he was endeavouring to recollect what he had been saying, he at length pointed to one of the cells, and resumed his devotions like one who felt impatient of whatever withdrew his attention from his sacred duties, were it but for an instant.

Hartley entered the cell indicated, with the usual salutation of Salaam Alaikum. His patient lay on a little carpet in a corner of the small whitewashed cell. He was a man of about forty, dressed in the black robe of his order, very much torn and patched. He wore a high conical cap of Tartarian felt, and had round his neck the string of black beads belonging to his order. His eyes and posture indicated suffering, which he was enduring with stoical patience.

'Salaam Alaikum,' said Hartley; 'you are in pain, my father?'—a title which he gave rather to the profession than to the years of the person he addressed.

'*Salaam Alaikum bema sebastem*,' answered the fakir; 'Well is it for you that you have suffered patiently. The book saith, such shall be the greeting of the angels to those who enter paradise.'

The conversation being thus opened, the physician proceeded to inquire into the complaints of the patient,

and to prescribe what he thought advisable. Having done this, he was about to retire, when, to his great surprise, the fakir tendered him a ring of some value.

'The wise,' said Hartley, declining the present, and at the same time paying a suitable compliment to the fakir's cap and robe,—'the wise of every country are brethren. My left hand takes no guerdon of my right.'

'A Feringi can then refuse gold!' said the fakir. 'I thought they took it from every hand, whether pure as that of an houri, or leprous like Gehazi's—even as the hungry dog recketh not whether the flesh he eateth be of the camel of the prophet Saleth, or of the ass of Degial—on whose head be curses!'

'The book says,' replied Hartley, 'that it is Allah who closes and who enlarges the heart. Frank and Mussulman are all alike moulded by his pleasure.'

'My brother hath spoken wisely,' answered the patient. 'Welcome the disease, if it bring thee acquainted with a wise physician. For what saith the poet—"It is well to have fallen to the earth, if while grovelling there thou shalt discover a diamond".'

The physician made repeated visits to his patient, and continued to do so even after the health of El Hadji was entirely restored. He had no difficulty in discerning in him one of those secret agents frequently employed by Asiatic sovereigns. His intelligence, his learning, above all, his versatility and freedom from prejudices of every kind, left no doubt of Barak's possessing the necessary qualifications for conducting such delicate negotiations; while his gravity of habit and profession could not prevent his features from expressing occasionally a perception of humour, not usually seen in devotees of his class.

Barak el Hadji talked often, amidst their private conversations, of the power and dignity of the Nawab of Mysore; and Hartley had little doubt that he came from the court of Haidar Alí on some secret mission, perhaps for achieving a more solid peace betwixt that able and sagacious prince and the East India Company's Government,—that which existed for the time being regarded on both parts as little more than a hollow and insincere truce. He told many stories to the advantage of this prince, who

certainly was one of the wisest that Hindustan could boast; and amidst great crimes, perpetrated to gratify his ambition, displayed many instances of princely generosity and, what was a little more surprising, of even-handed justice.

On one occasion, shortly before Barak el Hadji left Madras, he visited the doctor, and partook of his sherbet, which he preferred to his own, perhaps because a few glasses of rum or brandy were usually added to enrich the compound. It might be owing to repeated applications to the jar which contained this generous fluid, that the pilgrim became more than usually frank in his communications, and not contented with praising his Nawab with the most hyperbolic eloquence, he began to insinuate the influence which he himself enjoyed with the Invincible, the Lord and Shield of the Faith of the Prophet.

'Brother of my soul,' he said, 'do but think if thou needest aught that the all-powerful Haidar Alí Khan Bohauder can give; and then use not the intercession of those who dwell in palaces, and wear jewels in their turbans, but seek the cell of thy brother at the Great City, which is Seringapatam. And the poor fakir, in his torn cloak, shall better advance thy suit with the Nawab [for Haidar did not assume the title of Sultán] than they who sit upon seats of honour in the divan.'

With these and sundry other expressions of regard, he exhorted Hartley to come into the Mysore, and look upon the face of the Great Prince, whose glance inspired wisdom and whose nod conferred wealth, so that Folly or Poverty could not appear before him. He offered at the same time to requite the kindness which Hartley had evinced to him, by showing him whatever was worthy the attention of a sage in the land of Mysore.

Hartley was not reluctant to promise to undertake the proposed journey, if the continuance of good understanding betwixt their governments should render it practicable, and in reality looked forward to the possibility of such an event with a good deal of interest. The friends parted with mutual good wishes, after exchanging in the Oriental fashion such gifts as became sages to whom knowledge was to be supposed dearer than wealth. Barak el Hadji

presented Hartley with a small quantity of the balsam of Mecca, very hard to be procured in an unadulterated form, and gave him at the same time a passport in a peculiar character, which he assured him would be respected by every officer of the Nawab, should his friend be disposed to accomplish his visit to the Mysore. 'The head of him who should disrespect this safe-conduct,' he said, 'shall not be more safe than that of the barley-stalk which the reaper has grasped in his hand.'

Hartley requited these civilities by the present of a few medicines little used in the East, but such as he thought might, with suitable directions, be safely entrusted to a man so intelligent as his Moslem friend.

It was several months after Barak had returned to the interior of India, that Hartley was astonished by an unexpected rencounter.

The ships from Europe had but lately arrived, and had brought over their usual cargo of boys longing to be commanders, and young women without any purpose of being married, but whom a pious duty to some brother, some uncle, or other male relative, brought to India to keep his house, until they should find themselves unexpectedly in one of their own. Dr. Hartley happened to attend a public breakfast given on this occasion by a gentleman high in the service. The roof of his friend had been recently enriched by a consignment of three nieces, whom the old gentleman, justly attached to his quiet hookah and, it was said, to a pretty girl of colour, desired to offer to the public that he might have the fairest chance to get rid of his new guests as soon as possible. Hartley, who was thought a fish worth casting a fly for, was contemplating this fair investment with very little interest, when he heard one of the company say to another in a low voice,—

'Angels and ministers! there is our old acquaintance, the Queen of Sheba, returned upon our hands like unsaleable goods.'

Hartley looked in the same direction with the two who were speaking, and his eye was caught by a Semiramis-looking person, of unusual stature and amplitude, arrayed in a sort of riding habit, but so formed, and so looped and

gallooned with lace, as made it resemble the upper tunic of a native chief. Her robe was composed of crimson silk, rich with flowers of gold. She wore wide trousers of light blue silk, a fine scarlet shawl around her waist, in which was stuck a creese with a richly ornamented handle. Her throat and arms were loaded with chains and bracelets, and her turban, formed of a shawl similar to that worn around her waist, was decorated by a magnificent aigrette, from which a blue ostrich plume flowed in one direction, and a red one in another. The brow, of European complexion, on which this tiara rested, was too lofty for beauty, but seemed made for command; the aquiline nose retained its form, but the cheeks were a little sunken, and the complexion so very brilliant, as to give strong evidence that the whole countenance had undergone a thorough repair since the lady had left her couch. A black female slave, richly dressed, stood behind her with a chowry, or cow's tail, having a silver handle which she used to keep off the flies. From the mode in which she was addressed by those who spoke to her, this lady appeared a person of too much importance to be affronted or neglected, and yet one with whom none desired further communication than the occasion seemed in propriety to demand.

She did not, however, stand in need of attention. The well-known captain of an East Indian vessel lately arrived from Britain was sedulously polite to her; and two or three gentlemen, whom Hartley knew to be engaged in trade, tended upon her as they would have done upon the safety of a rich argosy.

'For Heaven's sake, what is that for a Zenobia?' said Hartley, to the gentleman whose whisper had first attracted his attention to this lofty dame.

'Is it possible you do not know the Queen of Sheba?' said the person of whom he inquired, no way loath to communicate the information demanded. 'You must know, then, that she is the daughter of a Scotch emigrant, who lived and died at Pondicherry, a sergeant in Lally's regiment. She managed to marry a partisan officer named Montreville, a Swiss or Frenchman, I cannot tell which. After the surrender of Pondicherry, this hero and heroine—But hey—what the devil are you thinking of?

If you stare at her that way, you will make a scene ; for she will think nothing of scolding you across the table.'

But without attending to his friend's remonstrances, Hartley bolted from the table at which he sat, and made his way, with something less than the decorum which the rules of society enjoin, towards the place where the lady in question was seated.

'The doctor is surely mad this morning,' said his friend Major Mercer to old Quartermaster Calder.

Indeed Hartley was not perhaps strictly in his senses ; for looking at the Queen of Sheba as he listened to Major Mercer, his eye fell on a light female form beside her, so placed as if she desired to be eclipsed by the bulky form and flowing robes we have described, and to his extreme astonishment he recognized the friend of his childhood, the love of his youth—Menie Gray herself !

To see her in India was in itself astonishing. To see her apparently under such strange patronage, greatly increased his surprise. To make his way to her, and address her, seemed the natural and direct mode of satisfying the feelings which her appearance excited.

His impetuosity was however checked, when, advancing close upon Miss Gray and her companion, he observed that the former, though she looked at him, exhibited not the slightest token of recognition, unless he could interpret as such that she slightly touched her upper lip with her fore-finger, which, if it happened otherwise than by mere accident, might be construed to mean, 'Do not speak to me just now.' Hartley, adopting such an interpretation, stood stock still, blushing deeply ; for he was aware that he made for the moment but a silly figure.

He was the rather convinced of this, when, with a voice which in the force of its accents corresponded with her commanding air, Mrs. Montreville addressed him in English, which savoured slightly of a Swiss patois,—'You haave come to us very fast, sir, to say nothing at all. Are you sure you did not get your tongue stolen by de way ? '

'I thought I had seen an old friend in that lady, madam,' stammered Hartley, 'but it seems I am mistaken.'

'The good people do tell me that you are one Doctors

Hartley, sir. Now, my friend and I do not know Doctor Hartley at all.'

'I have not the presumption to pretend to your acquaintance, madam, but him'——

Here Menie repeated the sign in such a manner that though it was only momentary, Hartley could not misunderstand its purpose; he therefore changed the end of his sentence, and added, 'But I have only to make my bow and ask pardon for my mistake.'

He retired back accordingly among the company, unable to quit the room, and inquiring at those whom he considered as the best newsmongers for such information as—'Who is that stately-looking woman, Mr. Butler?'

'Oh, the Queen of Sheba, to be sure.'

'And who is that pretty girl, who sits beside her?'

'Or rather behind her,' answered Butler, a military chaplain; 'faith, I cannot say—Pretty did you call her? turning his opera-glass that way—'Yes, faith, she is pretty—very pretty—Gad, she shoots her glances as smartly from behind the old pile yonder, as Teucer from behind Ajax Telamon's shield.'

'But who is she, can you tell me?'

'Some fair-skinned speculation of old Montreville's, I suppose, that she has got either to toady herself, or take in some of her black friends with. Is it possible you have never heard of old Mother Montreville?'

'You know I have been so long absent from Madras'—

'Well,' continued Butler, 'this lady is the widow of a Swiss officer in the French service, who, after the surrender of Pondicherry, went off into the interior and commenced soldier on his own account. He got possession of a fort under pretence of keeping it for some simple Raja or other, assembled around him a parcel of desperate vagabonds of every colour in the rainbow; occupied a considerable territory, of which he raised the duties in his own name, and declared for independence. But Haidar Naig understood no such interloping proceedings, and down he came, besieged the fort and took it, though some pretend it was betrayed to him by this very woman. Be that as it may, the poor Swiss was found dead on the ramparts. Certain it is, she received large sums of money, under pretence of

paying off her troops, surrendering of hill-forts, and Heaven knows what besides. She was permitted also to retain some insignia of royalty; and, as she was wont to talk of Haidar as the Eastern Solomon, she generally became known by the title of Queen of Sheba. She leaves her court when she pleases, and has been as far as Fort St. George before now. In a word, she does pretty much as she likes. The great folks here are civil to her, though they look on her as little better than a spy. As to Haidar, it is supposed he has ensured her fidelity by borrowing the greater part of her treasures, which prevents her from daring to break with him—besides other causes that smack of scandal of another sort.'

'A singular story,' replied Hartley to his companion, while his heart dwelt on the question, How it was possible that the gentle and simple Menie Gray should be in the train of such a character as this adventuress?

'But Butler has not told you the best of it,' said Major Mercer, who by this time came round to finish his own story. 'Your old acquaintance, Mr. Tresham, or Mr. Middlemas, or whatever else he chooses to be called, has been complimented by a report that he stood very high in the good graces of this same Boadicea. He certainly commanded some troops which she still keeps on foot, and acted at their head in the Nawab's service, who craftily employed him in whatever could render him odious to his countrymen. The British prisoners were entrusted to his charge, and, to judge by what I felt myself, the devil might take a lesson from him in severity.'

'And was he attached to, or connected with, this woman?'

'So Mrs. Rumour told us in our dungeon. Poor Jack Ward had the bastinado for celebrating their merits in a parody on the playhouse song,

> Sure such a pair were never seen,
> So aptly formed to meet by nature.

Hartley could listen no longer. The fate of Menie Gray, connected with such a man and such a woman, rushed on his fancy in the most horrid colours, and he was struggling through the throng to get to some place where he might collect his ideas and consider what could be done for her

protection, when a black attendant touched his arm, and at the same time slipped a card into his hand. It bore, 'Miss Gray, Mrs. Montreville's, at the house of Ram Sing Cottah in the Black Town.' On the reverse was written with a pencil, 'Eight in the morning.'

This intimation of her residence implied, of course, a permission, nay, an invitation, to wait upon her at the hour specified. Hartley's heart beat at the idea of seeing her once more, and still more highly at the thought of being able to serve her. At least, he thought, if there is danger near her, as is much to be suspected, she shall not want a counsellor or, if necessary, a protector. Yet, at the same time, he felt the necessity of making himself better acquainted with the circumstances of her case and the persons with whom she seemed connected. Butler and Mercer had both spoke to their disparagement; but Butler was a little of a coxcomb, and Mercer a great deal of a gossip. While he was considering what credit was due to their testimony, he was unexpectedly encountered by a gentleman of his own profession, a military surgeon, who had had the misfortune to have been in Haidar's prison till set at freedom by the late pacification. Mr. Esdale, for so he was called, was generally esteemed a rising man, calm, steady, and deliberate in forming his opinions. Hartley found it easy to turn the subject on the Queen of Sheba, by asking whether her Majesty was not somewhat of an adventuress.

'On my word, I cannot say,' answered Esdale, smiling; 'we are all upon the adventure in India, more or less; but I do not see that the Begum Montreville is more so than the rest.'

'Why, that Amazonian dress and manner,' said Hartley, 'savour a little of the *picaresca*.'

'You must not,' said Esdale, 'expect a woman who has commanded soldiers, and may again, to dress and look entirely like an ordinary person. But I assure you, that even at this time of day, if she wished to marry, she might easily find a respectable match.'

'Why, I heard that she had betrayed her husband's fort to Haidar.'

'Aye, that is a specimen of Madras gossip. The fact is

that she defended the place long after her husband fell, and afterwards surrendered it by capitulation. Haidar, who piques himself on observing the rules of justice, would not otherwise have admitted her to such intimacy.'

'Yes, I have heard,' replied Hartley, 'that their intimacy was rather of the closest.'

'Another calumny, if you mean any scandal,' answered Esdale. 'Haidar is too zealous a Mohammedan to entertain a Christian mistress; and besides, to enjoy the sort of rank which is yielded to a woman in her condition, she must refrain, in appearance at least, from all correspondence in the way of gallantry. Just so they said that the poor woman had a connexion with poor Middlemas of the —— regiment.'

'And was that also a false report?' said Hartley, in breathless anxiety.

'On my soul, I believe it was,' answered Mr. Esdale. 'They were friends, Europeans in an Indian court, and therefore intimate; but I believe nothing more. By the by, though, I believe there was some quarrel between Middlemas, poor fellow, and you; yet I am sure that you will be glad to hear there is a chance of his affair being made up.'

'Indeed!' was again the only word which Hartley could utter.

'Aye, indeed,' answered Esdale. 'The duel is an old story now; and it must be allowed that poor Middlemas, though he was rash in that business, had provocation.'

'But his desertion—his accepting of command under Haidar—his treatment of our prisoners—How can all these be passed over?' replied Hartley.

'Why, it is possible—I speak to you as a cautious man, and in confidence—that he may do us better service in Haidar's capital, or Tipû's camp, than he could have done if serving with his own regiment. And then, for his treatment of prisoners, I am sure I can speak nothing but good of him in that particular. He was obliged to take the office, because those that serve Haidar Naig must do or die. But he told me himself—and I believe him—that he accepted the office chiefly because, while he made a great bullying at us before the black fellows, he could privately

be of assistance to us. Some fools could not understand this and answered him with abuse and lampoons ; and he was obliged to punish them to avoid suspicion. Yes, yes, I and others can prove he was willing to be kind, if men would give him leave. I hope to thank him at Madras one day soon. All this in confidence—Good-morrow to you.'

Distracted by the contradictory intelligence he had received, Hartley went next to question old Captain Capstern, the captain of the Indiaman, whom he had observed in attendance upon the Begum Montreville. On inquiring after that commander's female passengers, he heard a pretty long catalogue of names, in which that he was so much interested in did not occur. On closer inquiry, Capstern recollected that Menie Gray, a young Scotch-woman, had come out under charge of Mrs. Duffer, the master's wife. 'A good decent girl,' Capstern said, 'and kept the mates and guinea-pigs at a respectable distance. She came out,' he believed, 'to be a sort of female companion, or upper servant, in Madame Montreville's family. Snug berth enough,' he concluded, 'if she can find the length of the old girl's foot.'

This was all that could be made of Capstern ; so Hartley was compelled to remain in a state of uncertainty until the next morning, when an explanation might be expected with Menie Gray in person.

CHAPTER XI

The exact hour assigned found Hartley at the door of the rich native merchant, who, having some reasons for wishing to oblige the Begum Montreville, had relinquished, for her accommodation and that of her numerous retinue, almost the whole of his large and sumptuous residence in the Black Town of Madras, as that district of the city is called which the natives occupy.

A domestic at the first summons ushered the visitor into an apartment, where he expected to be joined by Miss Gray. The room opened on one side into a small garden

or parterre, filled with the brilliant-coloured flowers of Eastern climates; in the midst of which the waters of a fountain rose upwards in a sparkling jet, and fell back again into a white marble cistern.

A thousand dizzy recollections thronged on the mind of Hartley, whose early feelings towards the companion of his youth, if they had slumbered during distance and the various casualties of a busy life, were revived when he found himself placed so near her, and in circumstances which interested from their unexpected occurrence and mysterious character. A step was heard—the door opened—a female appeared—but it was the portly form of Madame de Montreville.

'What do you please to want, sir?' said the lady; 'that is, if you have found your tongue this morning, which you had lost yesterday.'

'I proposed myself the honour of waiting upon the young person whom I saw in your Excellency's company yesterday morning,' answered Hartley, with assumed respect. 'I have had long the honour of being known to her in Europe, and I desire to offer my services to her in India.'

'Much obliged—much obliged; but Miss Gray is gone out, and does not return for one or two days. You may leave your commands with me.'

'Pardon me, madam,' replied Hartley; 'but I have some reason to hope you may be mistaken in this matter—And here comes the lady herself.'

'How is this, my dear?' said Mrs. Montreville, with unruffled front, to Menie as she entered; 'are you not gone out for two or three days, as I tell this gentleman!—*mais c'est égal*—it is all one thing. You will say, How d'ye do, and good-bye, to Monsieur, who is so polite as to come to ask after our healths, and as he sees us both very well he will go away home again.'

'I believe, madam,' said Miss Gray, with appearance of effort, 'that I must speak with this gentleman for a few minutes in private, if you will permit me.'

'That is to say, get you gone? but I do not allow that—I do not like private conversation between young man and pretty young woman; *cela n'est pas honnête.* It cannot be in my house.'

'It may be out of it, then, madam,' answered Miss Gray, not pettishly nor pertly, but with the utmost simplicity.—'Mr. Hartley, will you step into that garden?—and, you, madam, may observe us from the window, if it be the fashion of the country to watch so closely.'

As she spoke this she stepped through a lattice-door into the garden, and with an air so simple, that she seemed as if she wished to comply with her patroness's ideas of decorum though they appeared strange to her. The Queen of Sheba, notwithstanding her natural assurance, was disconcerted by the composure of Miss Gray's manner, and left the room apparently in displeasure. Menie turned back to the door which opened into the garden, and said in the same manner as before, but with less nonchalance,—

'I am sure I would not willingly break through the rules of a foreign country; but I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of speaking to so old a friend,—if indeed,' she added, pausing and looking at Hartley, who was much embarrassed, 'it be as much pleasure to Mr. Hartley as it is to me.'

'It would have been,' said Hartley, scarce knowing what he said—'it must be a pleasure to me in every circumstance—But this extraordinary meeting—But your father'——

Menie Gray's handkerchief was at her eyes.—'He is gone, Mr. Hartley. After he was left unassisted, his toilsome business became too much for him—he caught a cold which hung about him, as you know he was the last to attend to his own complaints, till it assumed a dangerous and, finally, a fatal character. I distress you, Mr. Hartley, but it becomes you well to be affected. My father loved you dearly.'

'Oh, Miss Gray!' said Hartley, 'it should not have been thus with my excellent friend at the close of his useful and virtuous life—Alas, wherefore—the question bursts from me involuntarily—wherefore could you not have complied with his wishes? wherefore'——

'Do not ask me,' said she, stopping the question which was on his lips; 'we are not the formers of our own destiny. It is painful to talk on such a subject; but for once, and for ever, let me tell you that I should have done Mr. Hartley wrong, if, even to secure his assistance to my

father, I had accepted his hand while my wayward affections did not accompany the act.'

'But wherefore do I see you here, Menie? Forgive me, Miss Gray, my tongue as well as my heart turns back to

MENIE GRAY

long-forgotten scenes—But why here?—why with this woman?'

'She is not, indeed, everything that I expected,' answered Menie; 'but I must not be prejudiced by foreign manners, after the step I have taken—She is, besides, attentive, and generous in her way, and I shall soon'—she paused a moment, and then added, 'be under better protection.

'That of Richard Middlemas?' said Hartley, with a faltering voice.

'I ought not, perhaps, to answer the question,' said Menie; 'but I am a bad dissembler, and those whom I trust, I trust entirely. You have guessed right, Mr. Hartley,' she added, colouring a good deal, 'I have come hither to unite my fate to that of your old comrade.'

'It is, then, just as I feared!' exclaimed Hartley.

'And why should Mr. Hartley fear?' said Menie Gray. 'I used to think you too generous—surely the quarrel which occurred long since ought not to perpetuate suspicion and resentment.'

'At least, if the feeling of resentment remained in my own bosom, it would be the last I should intrude upon you, Miss Gray,' answered Hartley. 'But it is for you, and for you alone, that I am watchful. This person—this gentleman whom you mean to entrust with your happiness—do you know where he is—and in what service?'

'I know both, more distinctly perhaps than Mr. Hartley can do. Mr. Middlemas has erred greatly, and has been severely punished. But it was not in the time of his exile and sorrow that she who has plighted her faith to him should, with the flattering world, turn her back upon him. Besides, you have, doubtless, not heard of his hopes of being restored to his country and his rank?'

'I have,' answered Hartley, thrown off his guard; 'but I see not how he can deserve it, otherwise than by becoming a traitor to his new master, and thus rendering himself even more unworthy of confidence than I hold him to be at this moment.'

'It is well that he hears you not,' answered Menie Gray, resenting, with natural feeling, the imputation on her lover. Then instantly softening her tone she added, 'My voice ought not to aggravate but to soothe your quarrel. Mr. Hartley, I plight my word to you that you do Richard wrong.'

She said these words with affecting calmness, suppressing all appearance of that displeasure, of which she was evidently sensible, upon this depreciation of a beloved object.

Hartley compelled himself to answer in the same strain.

'Miss Gray,' he said, 'your actions and motives will

always be those of an angel; but let me entreat you to view this most important matter with the eyes of worldly wisdom and prudence. Have you well weighed the risks attending the course which you are taking in favour of a man, who,—nay, I will not again offend you—who may, I hope, deserve your favour?'

'When I wished to see you in this manner, Mr. Hartley, and declined a communication in public, where we could have had less freedom of conversation, it was with the view of telling you everything. Some pain I thought old recollections might give, but I trusted it would be momentary; and, as I desire to retain your friendship, it is proper I should show that I still deserve it. I must then first tell you my situation after my father's death. In the world's opinion we were always poor, you know; but in the proper sense I had not known what real poverty was, until I was placed in dependence upon a distant relation of my poor father, who made our relationship a reason for casting upon me all the drudgery of her household, while she would not allow that it gave me a claim to countenance, kindness, or anything but the relief of my most pressing wants. In these circumstances I received from Mr. Middlemas a letter, in which he related his fatal duel and its consequence. He had not dared to write to me to share his misery—now, when he was in a lucrative situation, under the patronage of a powerful prince whose wisdom knew how to prize and protect such Europeans as entered his service—now, when he had every prospect of rendering our government such essential service by his interest with Haidar Alí, and might eventually nourish hopes of being permitted to return and stand his trial for the death of his commanding officer—now, he pressed me to come to India, and share his reviving fortunes by accomplishing the engagement into which we had long ago entered. A considerable sum of money accompanied this letter. Mrs. Duffer was pointed out as a respectable woman, who would protect me during the passage. Mrs. Montreville, a lady of rank, having large possessions and high interest in the Mysore, would receive me on my arrival at Fort St. George and conduct me safely to the dominions of Haidar. It was further recommended that,

considering the peculiar situation of Mr. Middlemas, his name should be concealed in the transaction, and that the ostensible cause of my voyage should be to fill an office in that lady's family—What was I to do? My duty to my poor father was ended, and my other friends considered the proposal as too advantageous to be rejected. The references given, the sum of money lodged, were considered as putting all scruples out of the question, and my immediate protectress and kinswoman was so earnest that I should accept of the offer made me as to intimate that she would not encourage me to stand in my own light, by continuing to give me shelter and food (she gave me little more) if I was foolish enough to refuse compliance.'

'Sordid wretch!' said Hartley, 'how little did she deserve such a charge!'

'Let me speak a proud word, Mr. Hartley, and then you will not perhaps blame my relations so much. All their persuasions, and even their threats, would have failed in inducing me to take a step which has an appearance, at least, to which I found it difficult to reconcile myself. But I had loved Middlemas—I love him still—why should I deny it?—and I have not hesitated to trust him. Had it not been for the small still voice which reminded me of my engagements, I had maintained more stubbornly the pride of womanhood, and, as you would perhaps have recommended, I might have expected, at least, that my lover should have come to Britain in person, and might have had the vanity to think,' she added, smiling faintly, 'that if I were worth having, I was worth fetching.'

'Yet now—even now' answered Hartley, 'be just to yourself while you are generous to your lover. Nay, do not look angrily, but hear me. I doubt the propriety of your being under the charge of this unsexed woman, who can no longer be termed a European. I have interest enough with females of the highest rank in the settlement—this climate is that of generosity and hospitality—there is not one of them, who, knowing your character and history, will not desire to have you in her society, and under her protection, until your lover shall be able to vindicate his title to your hand in the face of the world. I myself will be no cause of suspicion to him, or of inconvenience

to you, Menie. Let me have but your consent to the arrangement I propose, and the same moment that sees you under honourable and unsuspected protection, I will leave Madras, not to return till your destiny is in one way or other permanently fixed.'

'No, Hartley,' said Miss Gray. 'It may, it must be, friendly in you thus to advise me; but it would be most base in me to advance my own affairs at the expense of your prospects. Besides, what would this be but taking the chance of contingencies, with the view of sharing poor Middlemas's fortunes should they prove prosperous, and casting him off should they be otherwise? Tell me only, do you, of your own positive knowledge, aver that you consider this woman as an unworthy and unfit protectress for so young a person as I am?'

'Of my own knowledge I can say nothing; nay, I must own that reports differ even concerning Mrs. Montreville's character. But surely the mere suspicion'——

'The mere suspicion, Mr. Hartley, can have no weight with me, considering that I can oppose to it the testimony of the man with whom I am willing to share my future fortunes. You acknowledge the question is but doubtful, and should not the assertion of him of whom I think so highly decide my belief in a doubtful matter? What, indeed, must he be, should this Madame Montreville be other than he represented her?'

'What must he be, indeed!' thought Hartley internally, but his lips uttered not the words. He looked down in a deep reverie, and at length started from it at the words of Miss Gray.

'It is time to remind you, Mr. Hartley, that we must needs part. God bless and preserve you.'

'And you, dearest Menie,' exclaimed Hartley as he sank on one knee, and pressed to his lips the hand which she held out to him. 'God bless you!—you must deserve blessing. God protect you!—you must need protection. Oh, should things prove different from what you hope, send for me instantly, and if man can aid you, Adam Hartley will!'

He placed in her hand a card containing his address. He then rushed from the apartment. In the hall he met

the lady of the mansion, who made him a haughty reverence in token of adieu, while a native servant of the upper class, by whom she was attended, made a low and reverential salaam.

Hartley hastened from the Black Town, more satisfied than before that some deceit was about to be practised towards Menie Gray—more determined than ever to exert himself for her preservation; yet more completely perplexed, when he began to consider the doubtful character of the danger to which she might be exposed, and the scanty means of protection which she had to oppose to it.

CHAPTER XII

As Hartley left the apartment in the house of Ram Sing Cottah by one mode of exit, Miss Gray retired by another to an apartment destined for her private use. She, too, had reason for secret and anxious reflection, since all her love for Middlemas and her full confidence in his honour, could not entirely conquer her doubts concerning the character of the person whom he had chosen for her temporary protectress. And yet she could not rest these doubts upon anything distinctly conclusive; it was rather a dislike of her patroness's general manners, and a disgust at her masculine notions and expressions, that displeased her than anything else.

Meantime, Madame Montreville, followed by her black domestic, entered the apartment where Hartley and Menie had just parted. It appeared from the conversation which follows, that they had from some place of concealment overheard the dialogue we have narrated in the former chapter.

'It is good luck, Sadoc,' said the lady, 'that there is in this world the great fool.'

'And the great villain,' answered Sadoc, in good English but in a most sullen tone.

'This woman, now,' continued the lady, 'is what in Frangistan you call an angel.'

'Aye, and I have seen those in Hindustan you may well call devil.'

'I am sure that this—how you call him—Hartley, is a meddling devil. For what has he to do? She will not have any of him. What is his business who has her? I wish we were well up the Ghauts again, my dear Sadoc.'

'For my part,' answered the slave, 'I am half determined never to ascend the Ghauts more. Hark you, Adela, I begin to sicken of the plan we have laid. This creature's confiding purity—call her angel or woman, as you will—makes my practices appear too vile, even in my own eyes. I feel myself unfit to be your companion further in the daring paths which you pursue. Let us part, and part friends.'

'Amen, coward. But the woman remains with me,' answered the Queen of Sheba.[1]

'With thee!' replied the seeming black—'never. No, Adela. She is under the shadow of the British flag, and she shall experience its protection.'

'Yes—and what protection will it afford to you yourself?' retorted the Amazon. 'What if I should clap my hands, and command a score of my black servants to bind you like a sheep, and then send word to the Governor of the Presidency that one Richard Middlemas, who had been guilty of mutiny, murder, desertion, and serving of the enemy against his countrymen, is here, at Ram Sing Cottah's house, in the disguise of a black servant?' Middlemas covered his face with his hands, while Madame Montreville proceeded to load him with reproaches.—'Yes,' she said, 'slave and son of a slave! Since you wear the dress of my household, you shall obey me as fully as the rest of them, otherwise,—whips, fetters,—the scaffold, renegade,—the gallows, murderer! Dost thou dare to reflect on the abyss of misery from which I raised thee, to share my wealth and my affections? Dost thou not remember that the picture of this pale, cold, unimpassioned girl was then so indifferent to thee, that thou didst sacrifice it as a tribute due to the benevolence of her who relieved thee, to the

[1] In order to maintain uninjured the tone of passion throughout this dialogue, it has been judged expedient to discard, in the language of the Begum, the patois of Madame Montreville.

affection of her who, wretch as thou art, condescended to love thee ? '

' Yes, fell woman,' answered Middlemas, ' but was it I who encouraged the young tyrant's outrageous passion for a portrait, or who formed the abominable plan of placing the original within his power ? '

' No—for to do so required brain and wit. But it was thine, flimsy villain, to execute the device which a bolder genius planned ; it was thine to entice the woman to this foreign shore, under pretence of a love which, on thy part, cold-blooded miscreant, never had existed.'

' Peace, screech-owl ! ' answered Middlemas, ' nor drive me to such madness as may lead me to forget thou art a woman.'

' A woman, dastard ! Is this thy pretext for sparing me ? —what, then, art thou, who tremblest at a woman's looks, a woman's words ?—I am a woman, renegade, but one who wears a dagger, and despises alike thy strength and thy courage. I am a woman who has looked on more dying men than thou hast killed deer and antelopes. Thou must traffic for greatness ?—thou hast thrust thyself like a five-years' child, into the rough sports of men, and wilt only be borne down and crushed for thy pains. Thou wilt be a double traitor, forsooth—betray thy betrothed to the prince, in order to obtain the means of betraying the prince to the English, and thus gain thy pardon from thy countrymen. But me thou shalt not betray. I will not be made the tool of thy ambition—I will not give thee the aid of my treasures and my soldiers to be sacrificed at last to this northern icicle. No, I will watch thee as the fiend watches the wizard. Show but a symptom of betraying me while we are here, and I denounce thee to the English, who might pardon the successful villain, but not him who can only offer prayers for his life in place of useful services. Let me see thee flinch when we are beyond the Ghauts, and the Nawab shall know thy intrigues with the Nizam and the Mahrattas, and thy resolution to deliver up Bangalore to the English when the imprudence of Tipú shall have made thee killedar. Go where thou wilt, slave, thou shalt find me thy mistress.'

' And a fair though an unkind one,' said the counterfeit

Sadoc, suddenly changing his tone to an affectation of tenderness. 'It is true I pity this unhappy woman; true I would save her if I could—but most unjust to suppose I would in any circumstances prefer her to my Nourjehan, my light of the world, my Mootee Mahul, my pearl of the palace'——

'All false coin and empty compliment,' said the Begum. 'Let me hear, in two brief words, that you leave this woman to my disposal.'

'But not to be interred alive under your seat, like the Circassian of whom you were jealous,' said Middlemas, shuddering.

'No, fool; her lot shall not be worse than that of being the favourite of a prince. Hast thou, fugitive and criminal as thou art, a better fate to offer her?'

'But,' replied Middlemas, blushing even through his base disguise at the consciousness of his abject conduct, 'I will have no force on her inclinations.'

'Such truce she shall have as the laws of the zenana allow,' replied the female tyrant. 'A week is long enough for her to determine whether she will be the willing mistress of a princely and generous lover.'

'Aye,' said Richard, 'and before that week expires'—— He stopped short.

'What will happen before the week expires?' said the Begum Montreville.

'No matter—nothing of consequence. I leave the woman's fate with you.'

''Tis well—we march to-night on our return, so soon as the moon rises. Give orders to our retinue.'

'To hear is to obey,' replied the seeming slave, and left the apartment.

The eyes of the Begum remained fixed on the door through which he had passed. 'Villain—double-dyed villain!' she said, 'I see thy drift; thou wouldest betray Tipú, in policy alike and in love. But me thou canst not betray. Ho, there, who waits? Let a trusty messenger be ready to set off instantly with letters, which I will presently make ready. His departure must be a secret to every one. And now shall this pale phantom soon know her destiny, and learn what it is to have rivalled Adela Montreville.'

While the Amazonian princess meditated plans of vengeance against her innocent rival and the guilty lover, the latter plotted as deeply for his own purposes. He had waited until such brief twilight as India enjoys rendered his disguise complete, then set out in haste for the part of Madras inhabited by the Europeans, or, as it is termed, Fort St. George.

'I will save her yet,' he said; 'ere Tipú can seize his prize, we will raise around his ears a storm which would drive the God of War from the arms of the Goddess of Beauty. The trap shall close its fangs upon this Indian tiger, ere he has time to devour the bait which enticed him into the snare.'

While Middlemas cherished these hopes, he approached the Residency. The sentinel on duty stopped him, as of course, but he was in possession of the counter-sign, and entered without opposition. He rounded the building in which the President of the Council resided, an able and active but unconscientious man, who, neither in his own affairs nor in those of the Company, was supposed to embarrass himself much about the means which he used to attain his object. A tap at a small postern gate was answered by a black slave, who admitted Middlemas to that necessary appurtenance of every government, a back stair, which, in its turn, conducted him to the office of the Brahmin Paupiah, the dubash, or steward of the great man, and by whose means chiefly he communicated with the native courts, and carried on many mysterious intrigues which he did not communicate to his brethren at the council-board.

It is perhaps justice to the guilty and unhappy Middlemas to suppose that if the agency of a British officer had been employed, he might have been induced to throw himself on his mercy, might have explained the whole of his nefarious bargain with Tipú and, renouncing his guilty projects of ambition, might have turned his whole thoughts upon saving Menie Grey ere she was transported beyond the reach of British protection. But the thin dusky form which stood before him, wrapped in robes of muslin embroidered with gold, was that of Paupiah, known as a master-counsellor of dark projects, an Oriental Machiavel,

whose premature wrinkles were the result of many an intrigue in which the existence of the poor, the happiness of the rich, the honour of men, and the chastity of women, had been sacrificed without scruple, to attain some private or political advantage. He did not even inquire by what means the renegade Briton proposed to acquire that influence with Tipú which might enable him to betray him—he only desired to be assured that the fact was real.

'You speak at the risk of your head if you deceive Paupiah, or make Paupiah the means of deceiving his master. I know, so does all Madras, that the Nawab has placed his young son, Tipú, as vice-regent of his newly-conquered territory of Bangalore, which Haidar hath lately added to his dominions. But that Tipú should bestow the government of that important place on an apostate Feringi, seems more doubtful.'

'Tipú is young,' answered Middlemas, 'and to youth the temptation of the passions is what a lily on the surface of the lake is to childhood—they will risk life to reach it, though, when obtained, it is of little value. Tipú has the cunning of his father and his military talents, but he lacks his cautious wisdom.'

'Thou speakest truth—but when thou art Governor of Bangalore, hast thou forces to hold the place till thou art relieved by the Mahrattas, or by the British ?'

'Doubt it not—the soldiers of the Begum Mootee Mahul, whom the Europeans call Montreville, are less hers than mine. I am myself her Bukshee [General], and her Sirdars are at my devotion. With these I could keep Bangalore for two months, and the British army may be before it in a week. . What do you risk by advancing General Smith's army nearer to the frontier ?'

'We risk a settled peace with Haidar,' answered Paupiah, 'for which he has made advantageous offers. Yet I say not but thy plan may be most advantageous. Thou sayest Tipú's treasures are in the fort ?'

'His treasures and his zenana ; I may even be able to secure his person.'

'That were a goodly pledge,' answered the Hindu minister.

'And you consent that the treasures shall be divided to the last rupee, as in the scroll ?'

'The share of Paupiah's master is too small,' said the Brahmin; 'and the name of Paupiah is unnoticed.'

TIPÚ SULTÁN, AND HIS SIGNATURE AS USUALLY APPENDED TO STATE PAPERS

'The share of the Begum may be divided betwee Paupiah and his master,' answered Middlemas.

'But the Begum will expect her proportion,' replie Paupiah.

'Let me alone to deal with her,' said Middlemas. 'Before the blow is struck she shall not know of our private treaty, and afterwards her disappointment will be of little consequence. And now, remember my stipulations—my rank to be restored—my full pardon to be granted.'

'Aye,' replied Paupiah cautiously, 'should you succeed. But were you to betray what has here passed, I will find the dagger of a Lootie which shall reach thee, wert thou sheltered under the folds of the Nawab's garment. In the meantime, take this missive, and when you are in possession of Bangalore, dispatch it to General Smith, whose division shall have orders to approach as near the frontiers of Mysore as may be, without causing suspicion.'

Thus parted this worthy pair; Paupiah to report to his principal the progress of these dark machinations, Middlemas to join the Begum on her return to the Mysore. The gold and diamonds of Tipú, the importance which he was about to acquire, the ridding himself at once of the capricious authority of the irritable Tipú and the troublesome claims of the Begum, were such agreeable subjects of contemplation, that he scarcely thought of the fate of his European victim, unless to salve his conscience with the hope that the sole injury she could sustain might be the alarm of a few days, during the course of which he would acquire the means of delivering her from the tyrant, in whose zenana she was to remain a temporary prisoner. He resolved, at the same time, to abstain from seeing her till the moment he could afford her protection, justly considering the danger which his whole plan might incur if he again awakened the jealousy of the Begum. This he trusted was now asleep; and, in the course of their return to Tipú's camp near Bangalore, it was his study to soothe this ambitious and crafty female by blandishments, intermingled with the more splendid prospects of wealth and power to be opened to them both, as he pretended, by the success of his present enterprise.[1]

[1] It is scarce necessary to say that such things could only be acted in the earlier period of our Indian settlements, when the check of the Directors was imperfect, and that of the Crown did not exist. My friend Mr. Fairscribe is of opinion that there is an anachronism in the introduction of Paupiah, the Brahmin dubash of the English governor.—C. C.

CHAPTER XIII

It appears that the jealous and tyrannical Begum did not long suspend her purpose of agonizing her rival by acquainting her with her intended fate. By prayers or rewards, Menie Gray prevailed on a servant of Ram Sing Cottah, to deliver to Hartley the following distracted note :—

'All is true your fears foretold—He has delivered me up to a cruel woman, who threatens to sell me to the tyrant, Tipú. Save me if you can—if you have not pity, or cannot give me aid, there is none left upon earth.—M. G.'

The haste with which Dr. Hartley sped to the Fort, and demanded an audience of the Governor, was defeated by the delays interposed by Paupiah.

It did not suit the plans of this artful Hindu that any interruptions should be opposed to the departure of the Begum and her favourite, considering how much the plans of the last corresponded with his own. He affected incredulity on the charge when Hartley complained of an Englishwoman being detained in the train of the Begum against her consent, treated the complaint of Miss Gray as the result of some female quarrel unworthy of particular attention, and when at length he took some steps for examining further into the matter, he contrived they should be so tardy that the Begum and her retinue were far beyond the reach of interruption.

Hartley let his indignation betray him into reproaches against Paupiah, in which his principal was not spared. This only served to give the impassible Brahmin a pretext for excluding him from the Residency, with a hint that if his language continued to be of such an imprudent character, he might expect to be removed from Madras, and stationed at some hill-fort or village among the mountains where his medical knowledge would find full exercise in protecting himself and others from the unhealthiness of the climate.

As he retired, bursting with ineffectual indignation, Esdale was the first person whom Hartley chanced to meet with, and to him, stung with impatience, he communicated

what he termed the infamous conduct of the Governor's dubash, connived at, as he had but too much reason to suppose, by the Governor himself; exclaiming against the want of spirit which they betrayed in abandoning a British subject to the fraud of renegades, and the force of a tyrant.

Esdale listened with that sort of anxiety which prudent men betray when they feel themselves like to be drawn into trouble by the discourse of an imprudent friend.

'If you desire to be personally righted in this matter.' said he at length, 'you must apply to Leadenhall Street, where I suspect—betwixt ourselves—complaints are accumulating fast, both against Paupiah and his master.'

'I care for neither of them,' said Hartley; 'I need no personal redress—I desire none—I only want succour for Menie Gray.'

'In that case,' said Esdale, 'you have only one resource—you must apply to Haidar himself'——

'To Haidar—to the usurper—the tyrant?'

'Yes, to this usurper and tyrant,' answered Esdale, 'you must be contented to apply. His pride is to be thought a strict administrator of justice; and perhaps he may on this, as on other occasions, choose to display himself in the light of an impartial magistrate.'

'Then I go to demand justice at his footstool,' said Hartley.

'Not so fast, my dear Hartley,' answered his friend, 'first consider the risk. Haidar is just by reflection, and perhaps from political considerations; but by temperament his blood is as unruly as ever beat under a black skin, and if you do not find him in the vein of judging, he is likely enough to be in that of killing. Stakes and bowstrings are as frequently in his head as the adjustment of the scales of justice.'

'No matter—I will instantly present myself at his durbar. The Governor cannot for very shame refuse me letters of credence.'

'Never think of asking them,' said his more experienced friend; 'it would cost Paupiah little to have them so worded as to induce Haidar to rid our sable dubash, at once and for ever, of the sturdy free-spoken Dr. Adam

Hartley. A vakeel, or messenger of government, sets o to-morrow for Seringapatam ; contrive to join him on t road, his passport will protect you both. Do you kn none of the chiefs about Haidar's person ? '

' None, excepting his late emissary to this place, Bar el Hadji,' answered Hartley.

' His support,' said Esdale, ' although only a fakir, m be as effectual as that of persons of more essential con quence. And, to say the truth, where the caprice of despot is the question in debate, there is no knowing up what it is best to reckon. Take my advice, my de Hartley, leave this poor girl to her fate. After all, placing yourself in an attitude of endeavouring to sa her, it is a hundred to one that you only ensure your o destruction.'

Hartley shook his head, and bade Esdale hastily farewe leaving him in the happy and self-applauding state of mi proper to one who has given the best advice possi to a friend, and may conscientiously wash his hands of consequences.

. Having furnished himself with money, and with t attendance of three trusty native servants, mounted li himself on Arab horses, and carrying with them no tent a very little baggage, the anxious Hartley lost not a mome in taking the road to Mysore, endeavouring, in the meantim by recollecting every story he had ever heard of Haida justice and forbearance, to assure himself that he shou find the Nawab disposed to protect a helpless female, ev against the future heir of his empire.

Before he crossed the Madras territory, he overto the vakeel, or messenger of the British Government, whom Esdale had spoken. This man, accustomed for sum of money to permit adventurous European trade who desired to visit Haidar's capital, to share his protectio passport, and escort, was not disposed to refuse the sa good office to a gentleman of credit at Madras ; an propitiated by an additional gratuity, undertook travel as speedily as possible. It was a journey whi was not prosecuted without much fatigue and considerab danger, as they had to traverse a country frequent exposed to all the evils of war, more especially when th

pproached the Ghauts, those tremendous mountain-passes vhich descend from the table-land of Mysore, and through vhich the mighty streams that arise in the centre of the ndian peninsula find their way to the ocean.

The sun had set ere the party reached the foot of one of hese perilous passes, up which lay the road to Seringa-patam. A narrow path, which in summer resembled an empty watercourse, winding upwards among immense rocks and precipices, was at one time completely over-shadowed by dark groves of teak-trees, and at another, found its way beside impenetrable jungles, the habitation of jackals and tigers.

By means of this unsocial path the travellers threaded their way in silence,—Hartley, whose impatience kept him before the vakeel, eagerly inquiring when the moon would enlighten the darkness, which, after the sun's disappear-ance, closed fast around them. He was answered by the natives according to their usual mode of expression, that the moon was in her dark side, and that he was not to hope to behold her bursting through a cloud to illuminate the thickets and strata of black and slaty rocks, amongst which they were winding. Hartley had therefore no resource, save to keep his eye steadily fixed on the lighted match of the sowar, or horseman, who rode before him, which for sufficient reasons, was always kept in readiness to be applied to the priming of the matchlock. The vidette, on his part, kept a watchful eye on the dowrah, a guide supplied at the last village, who, having got more than half-way from his own house, was much to be suspected of meditating how to escape the trouble of going farther.[1]

The dowrah, on the other hand, conscious of the lighted match and loaded gun behind him, hallooed from time to time to show that he was on his duty, and to accelerate the march of the travellers. His cries were answered by an

[1] In every village the dowrah, or guide, is an official person upon the public establishment, and receives a portion of the harvest or other revenue, along with the smith, the sweeper, and the barber. As he gets nothing from the travellers whom it is his office to conduct, he never scruples to shorten his own journey and prolong theirs by taking them to the nearest village, without reference to the most direct line of route, and sometimes deserts them entirely. If the regular dowrah is sick or absent, no wealth can procure a substitute.

occasional ejaculation of Ulla from the black soldiers who closed the rear, and who were meditating on former adventures, the plundering of a *kaffila* (party of travelling merchants) or some such exploit, or perhaps reflecting that a tiger in the neighbouring jungle might be watching patiently for the last of the party, in order to spring upon him according to his usual practice.

The sun, which appeared almost as suddenly as it had left them, served to light the travellers in the remainder of the ascent, and called forth from the Mohammedans belonging to the party the morning prayer of Alla Akbar, which resounded in long notes among the rocks and ravines, and they continued with better advantage their forced march until the pass opened upon a boundless extent of jungle, with a single high mud fort rising through the midst of it. Upon this plain rapine and war had suspended the labours of industry, and the rich vegetation of the soil had in a few years converted a fertile champaign country into an almost impenetrable thicket. Accordingly, the banks of a small nullah, or brook, were covered with the foot-marks of tigers and other animals of prey.

Here the travellers stopped to drink and to refresh themselves and their horses; and it was near this spot that Hartley saw a sight which forced him to compare the subject which engrossed his own thoughts with the distress that had afflicted another.

At a spot not far distant from the brook, the guide called their attention to a most wretched-looking man, overgrown with hair, who was seated on the skin of a tiger. His body was covered with mud and ashes, his skin sunburnt, his dress a few wretched tatters. He appeared not to observe the approach of the strangers, neither moving nor speaking a word, but remaining with his eyes fixed on a small and rude tomb, formed of the black slate stones which lay around, and exhibiting a small recess for a lamp. As they approached the man and placed before him a rupee or two and some rice, they observed that a tiger's skull and bones lay beside him, with a sabre almost consumed by rust.

While they gazed on this miserable object, the guide acquainted them with his tragical history. Sadhu Sing had been a sipahee, or soldier, and freebooter of course,

the native and the pride of a half-ruined village which they had passed on the preceding day. He was betrothed to the daughter of a sipahee, who served in the mud fort which they saw at a distance rising above the jungle. In due time, Sadhu, with his friends, came for the purpose of the marriage, and to bring home the bride. She was mounted on a tatoo, a small horse belonging to the country, and Sadhu and his friends preceded her on foot, in all their joy and pride. As they approached the nullah near which the travellers were resting, there was heard a dreadful roar accompanied by a shriek of agony. Sadhu Sing, who instantly turned, saw no trace of his bride, save that her horse ran wild in one direction, whilst in the other the long grass and reeds of the jungle were moving like the ripple of the ocean when distorted by the course of a shark holding its way near the surface. Sadhu drew his sabre and rushed forward in that direction ; the rest of the party remained motionless until roused by a short roar of agony. They then plunged into the jungle with their drawn weapons, where they speedily found Sadhu Sing holding in his arms the lifeless corpse of his bride, where a little farther lay the body of the tiger, slain by such a blow over the neck as desperation itself could alone have discharged. The brideless bridegroom would permit none to interfere with his sorrow. He dug a grave for his Mora, and erected over it the rude tomb they saw, and never afterwards left the spot. The beasts of prey themselves seemed to respect or dread the extremity of his sorrow. His friends brought him food and water from the nullah, but he neither smiled nor showed any mark of acknowledgement, unless when they brought him flowers to deck the grave of Mora. Four or five years, according to the guide, had passed away, and there Sadhu Sing still remained among the trophies of his grief and his vengeance, exhibiting all the symptoms of advanced age, though still in the prime of youth. The tale hastened the travellers from their resting-place ; the vakeel because it reminded him of the dangers of the jungle, and Hartley because it coincided too well with the probable fate of his beloved, almost within the grasp of a more formidable tiger than that whose skeleton lay beside Sadhu Sing.

It was at the mud fort already mentioned that the travellers received the first accounts of the progress of the Begum and her party, by a peon (or foot-soldier) who had been in their company, but was now on his return to the coast. They had travelled, he said, with great speed, until they ascended the Ghauts, where they were joined by a party of the Begum's own forces; and he and others, who had been brought from Madras as a temporary escort, were paid and dismissed to their homes. After this, he understood it was the purpose of the Begum Mootee Mahul, to proceed by slow marches and frequent halts to Bangalore, the vicinity of which place she did not desire to reach until Prince Tipú, with whom she desired an interview, should have returned from an expedition towards Vandicotta, in which he had lately been engaged.

From the result of his anxious inquiries, Hartley had reason to hope that though Seringapatam was seventy-five miles more to the eastward than Bangalore, yet, by using diligence, he might have time to throw himself at the feet of Haidar, and beseech his interposition, before the meeting betwixt Tipú and the Begum should decide the fate of Menie Gray. On the other hand, he trembled as the peon told him that the Begum's bukshee, or general, who had travelled to Madras with her in disguise, had now assumed the dress and character belonging to his rank, and it was expected he was to be honoured by the Mohammedan prince with some high office of dignity. With still deeper anxiety, he learned that a palanquin, watched with sedulous care by the slaves of Oriental jealously, contained, it was whispered, a Feringi, or Frankish woman, beautiful as a houri, who had been brought from England by the Begum as a present to Tipú. The deed of villany was therefore in full train to be accomplished; it remained to see whether by diligence on Hartley's side its course could be interrupted.

When this eager vindicator of betrayed innocence arrived in the capital of Haidar, it may be believed that he consumed no time in viewing the temple of the celebrated Vishnu, or in surveying the splendid gardens called Lollbang, which were the monument of Haidar's magnificence, and now hold his mortal remains. On the contrary, he

was no sooner arrived in the city, than he hastened to the principal mosque, having no doubt that he was there most likely to learn some tidings of Barak el Hadji. He approached accordingly the sacred spot, and as to enter it would have cost a Feringi his life, he employed the agency of a devout Mussulman to obtain information concerning the person whom he sought. He was not long in learning that the fakir Barak was within the mosque, as he had anticipated, busied with his holy office of reading passages from the Koran and its most approved commentators. To interrupt him in his devout task was impossible, and it was only by a high bribe that he could prevail on the same Moslem whom he had before employed, to slip into the sleeve of the holy man's robe a paper containing his name, and that of the khan in which the vakeel had taken up his residence. The agent brought back for answer that the fakir, immersed, as was to be expected, in the holy service which he was in the act of discharging, had paid no visible attention to the symbol of intimation which the Feringi Sahib (European gentleman) had sent to him. Distracted with the loss of time, of which each moment was precious, Hartley next endeavoured to prevail on the Mussulman to interrupt the fakir's devotions with a verbal message ; but the man was indignant at the very proposal.

'Dog of a Christian!' he said, 'what art thou and thy whole generation, that Barak el Hadji should lose a divine thought for the sake of an infidel like thee?'

Exasperated beyond self-possession, the unfortunate Hartley was now about to intrude upon the precincts of the mosque in person, in hopes of interrupting the formal prolonged recitation which issued from its recesses, when an old man laid his hand on his shoulder, and prevented him from a rashness which might have cost him his life, saying, at the same time, 'You are a Sahib Angrezie [English gentleman], I have been a telinga [a private soldier] in the Company's service, and have eaten their salt. I will do your errand for you to the fakir Barak el Hadji.'

So saying, he entered the mosque, and presently returned with the fakir's answer, in these enigmatical words :—'He who would see the sun rise must watch till the dawn.'

With this poor subject of consolation, Hartley retired to his inn, to meditate on the futility of the professions of the natives, and to devise some other mode of finding access to Haidar than that which he had hitherto trusted to. On this point, however, he lost all hope, being informed by his late fellow-traveller whom he found at the khan, that the Nawab was absent from the city on a secret expedition, which might detain him for two or three days. This was the answer which the vakeel himself had received from the dewan, with a further intimation that he must hold himself ready, when he was required, to deliver his credentials to Prince Tipú, instead of the Nawab; his business being referred to the former, in a way not very promising for the success of his mission.

Hartley was now nearly thrown into despair. He applied to more than one officer supposed to have credit with the Nawab, but the slightest hint of the nature of his business seemed to strike all with terror. Not one of the persons he applied to would engage in the affair, or even consent to give it a hearing; and the dewan plainly told him that to engage in opposition to Prince Tipú's wishes was the ready way to destruction, and exhorted him to return to the coast. Driven almost to distraction by his various failures, Hartley betook himself in the evening to the khan. The call of the muezzins, thundering from the minarets, had invited the faithful to prayers, when a black servant, about fifteen years old, stood before Hartley and pronounced these words, deliberately, and twice over,—'Thus says Barak el Hadji, the watcher in the mosque: He that would see the sun rise, let him turn towards the east.' He then left the caravanserai; and it may be well supposed that Hartley, starting from the carpet on which he had lain down to repose himself, followed his youthful guide with renewed vigour and palpitating hope.

CHAPTER XIV

'Twas the hour when rites unholy
Call'd each Paynim voice to prayer,
And the star that faded slowly,
Left to dews the freshen'd air.

Day his sultry fires had wasted,
Calm and cool the moonbeams shone;
To the Vizier's lofty palace
One bold Christian came alone.

THOMAS CAMPBELL, *quoted from memory.*

THE twilight darkened into night so fast, that it was only by his white dress that Hartley could discern his guide as he tripped along the splendid bazaar of the city. But the obscurity was so far favourable that it prevented the inconvenient attention which the natives might otherwise have bestowed upon the European in his native dress, a sight at that time very rare in Seringapatam.

The various turnings and windings through which he was conducted, ended at a small door in a wall which, from the branches that hung over it, seemed to surround a garden or grove.

The postern opened on a tap from his guide, and the slave having entered, Hartley prepared to follow, but stepped back as a gigantic African brandished at his head a scimitar three fingers broad. The young slave touched his countryman with a rod which he held in his hand, and it seemed as if the touch disabled the giant, whose arm and weapon sank instantly. Hartley entered without further opposition, and was now in a grove of mango-trees, through which an infant moon was twinkling faintly amid the murmur of waters, the sweet song of the nightingale, and the odours of the rose, yellow jasmine, orange and citron flowers, and Persian narcissus. Huge domes and arches, which were seen imperfectly in the quivering light, seemed to intimate the neighbourhood of some sacred edifice, where the fakir had doubtless taken up his residence.

Hartley pressed on with as much haste as he could, and entered a side-door and narrow vaulted passage, at the end

of which was another door. Here his guide stopped, but pointed and made indications that the European should enter. Hartley did so, and found himself in a small cell, such as we have formerly described, wherein sat Barak el Hadji with another fakir, who, to judge from the extreme dignity of a white beard which ascended up to his eyes on each side, must be a man of great sanctity as well as importance.

Hartley pronounced the usual salutation of Salaam Alaikum in the most modest and deferential tone; but his former friend was so far from responding in their former strain of intimacy that, having consulted the eye of his older companion, he barely pointed to a third carpet, upon which the stranger seated himself cross-legged after the country fashion, and a profound silence prevailed for the space of several minutes. Hartley knew the Oriental customs too well to endanger the success of his suit by precipitation. He waited an intimation to speak. At length it came, and from Barak.

'When the pilgrim Barak,' he said, 'dwelt at Madras, he had eyes and a tongue; but now he is guided by those of his father, the holy Scheik Hali ben Khaledoun, the superior of his convent.'

This extreme humility Hartley thought inconsistent with the affectation of possessing superior influence, which Barak had shown while at the Presidency; but exaggeration of their own consequence is a foible common to all who find themselves in a land of strangers. Addressing the senior fakir, therefore, he told him in as few words as possible the villanous plot which was laid to betray Menie Gray into the hands of the Prince Tipú. He made his suit for the reverend father's intercession with the prince himself, and with his father the Nawab, in the most persuasive terms. The fakir listened to him with an inflexible and immovable aspect, similar to that with which a wooden saint regards his eager supplicants. There was a second pause, when, after resuming his pleading more than once, Hartley was at length compelled to end it for want of matter.

The silence was broken by the elder fakir who, after shooting a glance at his younger companion by a turn of the eye, without the least alteration of the position of the

head and body, said, 'The unbeliever has spoken like a poet. But does he think that the Nawab Khan Haidar Alí Bohauder will contest with his son Tipú the victorious, the possession of an infidel slave?'

Hartley received at the same time a side glance from Barak, as if encouraging him to plead his own cause. He suffered a minute to elapse, and then replied,—

'The Nawab is in the place of the Prophet, a judge over the low as well as high. It is written that when the Prophet decided a controversy between the two sparrows concerning a grain of rice, his wife Fatima said to him, "Doth the Missionary of Allah well to bestow his time in distributing justice on a matter so slight, and between such despicable litigants?" "Know, woman," answered the Prophet, "that the sparrows and the grain of rice are the creation of Allah. They are not worth more than thou hast spoken; but justice is a treasure of inestimable price, and it must be imparted by him who holdeth power to all who require it at his hand. The prince doth the will of Allah, who gives it alike in small matters as in great, and to the poor as well as the powerful. To the hungry bird, a grain of rice is as a chaplet of pearls to a sovereign." I have spoken.'

'Bismallah! Praised be God! he hath spoken like a mullah,' said the elder fakir, with a little more emotion, and some inclination of his head towards Barak, for on Hartley he scarcely deigned even to look.

'The lips have spoken it which cannot lie,' replied Barak. and there was again a pause.

It was once more broken by Scheik Hali who, addressing himself directly to Hartley, demanded of him, 'Hast thou heard, Feringi, of aught of treason meditated by this Kafr [infidel] against the Nawab Bohauder?'

'Out of a traitor cometh treason,' said Hartley, 'but, to speak after my knowledge, I am not conscious of such design.'

'There is truth in the words of him,' said the fakir, 'who accuseth not his enemy save on his knowledge. The things thou hast spoken shall be laid before the Nawab; and as Allah and he will, so shall the issue be. Meantime, return to thy khan, and prepare to attend the vakeel of thy government, who is to travel with dawn to Bangalore,

the strong, the happy, the holy city. Peace be with thee! Is it not so, my son?'

Barak, to whom this appeal was made, replied, 'Even as my father hath spoken.'

Hartley had no alternative but to arise and take his leave with the usual phrase, 'Salaam—God's peace be with you!'

His youthful guide, who waited his return without, conducted him once more to his khan, through by-paths which he could not have found out without pilotage. His thoughts were in the meantime strongly engaged on his late interview. He knew the Moslem men of religion were not implicitly to be trusted. The whole scene might be a scheme of Barak to get rid of the trouble of patronizing a European in a delicate affair; and he determined to be guided by what should seem to confirm or discredit the intimation which he had received.

On his arrival at the khan, he found the vakeel of the British government in a great bustle, preparing to obey directions transmitted to him by the Nawab's dewan, or treasurer, directing him to depart the next morning with break of day for Bangalore.

He expressed great discontent at the order, and when Hartley intimated his purpose of accompanying him, seemed to think him a fool for his pains, hinting the probability that Haidar meant to get rid of them both by means of the freebooters through whose countries they were to pass with such a feeble escort. This fear gave way to another, when the time of departure came, at which moment there rode up about two hundred of the Nawab's native cavalry. The Sirdar who commanded these troops behaved with civility, and stated that he was directed to attend upon the travellers and to provide for their safety and convenience on the journey; but his manner was reserved and distant, and the vakeel insisted that the force was intended to prevent their escape rather than for their protection. Under such unpleasant auspices, the journey between Seringapatam and Bangalore was accomplished in two days and part of a third, the distance being nearly eighty miles.

On arriving in view of this fine and populous city, they

found an encampment already established within a mile of its walls. It occupied a tope or knoll covered with trees, and looked full on the gardens which Tipú had created in one quarter of the city. The rich pavilions of the principal persons flamed with silk and gold ; and spears with gilded points, or poles supporting gold knobs, displayed numerous little banners inscribed with the name of the Prophet. This was the camp of the Begum Mootee Mahul who, with a small body of her troops, about two hundred men, was waiting the return of Tipú under the walls of Bangalore. Their private motives for desiring a meeting the reader is acquainted with ; to the public the visit of the Begum had only the appearance of an act of deference, frequently paid by inferior and subordinate princes to the patrons whom they depend upon.

These facts ascertained, the Sirdar of the Nawab took up his own encampment within sight of that of the Begum, but at about half a mile's distance, dispatching to the city a messenger to announce to the Prince Tipú, as soon as he should arrive, that he had come hither with the English vakeel.

The bustle of pitching a few tents was soon over, and Hartley, solitary and sad, was left to walk under the shade of two or three mango-trees, and looking to the displayed streamers of the Begum's encampment, to reflect that amid these insignia of Mohammedanism Menie Gray remained, destined by a profligate and treacherous lover to the fate of slavery to a heathen tyrant. The consciousness of being in her vicinity added to the bitter pangs with which Hartley contemplated her situation, and reflected how little chance there appeared of his being able to rescue her from it by the mere force of reason and justice, which was all he could oppose to the selfish passions of a voluptuous tyrant. A lover of romance might have meditated some means of effecting her release by force or address ; but Hartley, though a man of courage, had no spirit of adventure, and would have regarded as desperate any attempt of the kind.

His sole gleam of comfort arose from the impression which he had apparently made upon the elder fakir, which he could not help hoping might be of some avail to him.

But on one thing he was firmly resolved, and that was not to relinquish the cause he had engaged in whilst a grain of hope remained. He had seen in his own profession a quickening and a revival of life in the patient's eye, even when glazed apparently by the hand of Death ; and he was taught confidence amidst moral evil by his success in relieving that which was physical only.

While Hartley was thus meditating, he was roused to attention by a heavy firing of artillery from the high bastions of the town ; and turning his eyes in that direction, he could see advancing, on the northern side of Bangalore, a tide of cavalry, riding tumultuously forward, brandishing their spears in all different attitudes, and pressing their horses to a gallop. The clouds of dust which attended this vanguard, for such it was, combined with the smoke of the guns, did not permit Hartley to see distinctly the main body which followed ; but the appearance of howdahed elephants and royal banners dimly seen through the haze, plainly intimated the return of Tipú to Bangalore ; while shouts, and irregular discharges of musketry, announced the real or pretended rejoicing of the inhabitants. The city gates received the living torrent which rolled towards them ; the clouds of smoke and dust were soon dispersed, and the horizon was restored to serenity and silence.

The meeting between persons of importance, more especially of royal rank, is a matter of very great consequence in India, and generally much address is employed to induce the person receiving the visit to come as far as possible to meet the visitor. From merely rising up, or going to the edge of the carpet, to advancing to the gate of the palace, to that of the city, or, finally, to a mile or two on the road, is all subject to negotiation. But Tipú's impatience to possess the fair European induced him to grant on this occasion a much greater degree of courtesy than the Begum had dared to expect, and he appointed his garden, adjacent to the city walls, and indeed included within the precincts of the fortifications, as the place of their meeting ; the hour noon, on the day succeeding his arrival ; for the natives seldom move early in the morning or before having broken their fast. This was intimated to the Begum's

messenger by the prince in person, as, kneeling before him, he presented the *nuzzar* (a tribute consisting of three, five, or seven gold mohurs, always an odd number) and received in exchange a khelaut, or dress of honour. The messenger, in return, was eloquent in describing the importance of his mistress, her devoted veneration for the prince, the pleasure which she experienced on the prospect of their motakul, or meeting, and concluded with a more modest compliment to his own extraordinary talents, and the confidence which the Begum reposed in him. He then departed ; and orders were given that on the next day all should be in readiness for the *Sowarree*, a grand procession, when the prince was to receive the Begum as his honoured guest at his pleasure-house in the gardens.

Long before the appointed hour, the rendezvous of fakirs, beggars, and idlers, before the gate of the palace, intimated the excited expectations of those who usually attend processions ; while a more urgent set of mendicants, the courtiers, were hastening thither, on horses or elephants as their means afforded, always in a hurry to show their zeal, and with a speed proportioned to what they hoped or feared.

At noon precisely, a discharge of cannon, placed in the outer courts, as also of matchlocks and of small swivels, carried by camels (the poor animals shaking their long ears at every discharge), announced that Tipú had mounted his elephant. The solemn and deep sound of the naggra, or state drum, borne upon an elephant, was then heard like the distant discharge of artillery, followed by a long roll of musketry, and was instantly answered by that of numerous trumpets and tom-toms (or common drums) making a discordant, but yet a martial din. The noise increased as the procession traversed the outer courts of the palace in succession, and at length issued from the gates, having at their head the chobdars, bearing silver sticks and clubs, and shouting at the pitch of their voices the titles and the virtues of Tipú, the great, the generous, the invincible—strong as Rustan, just as Noushirvan—with a short prayer for his continued health.

After these came a confused body of men on foot, bearing spears, matchlocks, and banners, and intermixed

with horsemen, some in complete shirts of mail with caps of steel under their turbans, some in a sort of defensive armour consisting of rich silk dresses rendered sabre-proof by being stuffed with cotton. These champions preceded the prince, as whose body-guards they acted. It was not till after this time that Tipú raised his celebrated tiger-regiment, disciplined and armed according to the European fashion. Immediately before the prince, came, on a small elephant, a hard-faced, severe-looking man, by office the distributor of alms, which he flung in showers of small copper money among the fakirs and beggars, whose scrambles to collect them seemed to augment their amount; while the grim-looking agent of Mohammedan charity, together with his elephant, which marched with half angry eyes and its trunk curled upwards, seemed both alike ready to chastise those whom poverty should render too importunate.

Tipú himself next appeared, richly apparelled, and seated on an elephant which, carrying its head above all the others in the procession, seemed proudly conscious of superior dignity. The howdah, or seat which the prince occupied, was of silver, embossed and gilt, having behind a place for a confidential servant, who waved the great chowry, or cow-tail, to keep off the flies; but who could also occasionally perform the task of spokesman, being well versed in all terms of flattery and compliment. The caparisons of the royal elephant were of scarlet cloth, richly embroidered with gold. Behind Tipú came the various courtiers and officers of the household, mounted chiefly on elephants, all arrayed in their most splendid attire and exhibiting the greatest pomp.

In this manner the procession advanced down the principal street of the town to the gate of the royal gardens. The houses were ornamented by broadcloth, silk shawls, and embroidered carpets of the richest colours, displayed from the verandas and windows; even the meanest hut was adorned with some piece of cloth, so that the whole street had a singularly rich and gorgeous appearance.

This splendid procession having entered the royal gardens, approached, through a long avenue of lofty trees, a chabootra, or platform of white marble, canopied by

arches of the same material, which occupied the centre. It was raised four or five feet from the ground, covered with white cloth and Persian carpets. In the centre of the platform was the musnud, or state cushion of the prince, six feet square, composed of crimson velvet, richly embroidered. By special grace, a small low cushion was placed on the right of the prince, for the occupation of the Begum. In front of this platform was a square tank, or pond of marble, four feet deep, and filled to the brim with water as clear as crystal, having a large jet or fountain in the middle which threw up a column of it to the height of twenty feet.

The Prince Tipú had scarcely dismounted from his elephant, and occupied the musnud, or throne of cushions, when the stately form of the Begum was seen advancing to the place of rendezvous. The elephant being left at the gate of the gardens opening into the country, opposite to that by which the procession of Tipú had entered, she was carried in an open litter, richly ornamented with silver, and borne on the shoulders of six black slaves. Her person was as richly attired as silks and gems could accomplish.

Richard Middlemas, as the Begum's general or bukshee, walked nearest to her litter, in a dress as magnificent in itself as it was remote from all European costume, being that of a Banka or Indian courtier. His turban was of rich silk and gold, twisted very hard and placed on one side of his head, its ends hanging down on the shoulder. His moustaches were turned and curled, and his eyelids stained with antimony. The vest was of gold brocade, with a cummerbund, or sash, around his waist, corresponding to his turban. He carried in his hand a large sword, sheathed in a scabbard of crimson velvet, and wore around his middle a broad embroidered sword-belt. What thoughts he had under this gay attire, and the bold bearing which corresponded to it, it would be fearful to unfold. His least detestable hopes were perhaps those which tended to save Menie Gray, by betraying the prince who was about to confide in him, and the Begum, at whose intercession Tipú's confidence was to be reposed.

The litter stopped as it approached the tank, on the opposite side of which the prince was seated on his musnud. Middlemas assisted the Begum to descend, and led her,

deeply veiled with silver muslin, towards the platform of marble. The rest of the retinue of the Begum followed in their richest and most gaudy attire, all males, however ; nor was there a symptom of woman being in her train, except that a close litter, guarded by twenty black slaves, having their sabres drawn, remained at some distance in a thicket of flowering shrubs.

When Tipú Sahib, through the dim haze which hung over the waterfall, discerned the splendid train of the Begum advancing, he arose from his musnud so as to receive her near the foot of his throne, and exchanged greetings with her upon the pleasure of meeting and inquiries after their mutual health. He then conducted her to the cushion placed near to his own, while his courtiers anxiously showed their politeness in accommodating those of the Begum with places upon the carpets around, where they all sat down cross-legged—Richard Middlemas occupying a conspicuous situation.

The people of inferior note stood behind, and amongst them was the Sirdar of Haidar Alí, with Hartley and the Madras vakeel. It would be impossible to describe the feelings with which Hartley recognized the apostate Middlemas and the Amazonian Mrs. Montreville. The sight of them worked up his resolution to make an appeal against them in full durbar, to the justice which Tipú was obliged to render to all who should complain of injuries. In the meanwhile, the prince, who had hitherto spoken in a low voice while acknowledging it is to be supposed the services and the fidelity of the Begum, now gave the sign to his attendant, who said, in an elevated tone, ' Wherefore, and to requite these services, the mighty prince, at the request of the mighty Begum, Mootee Mahul, beautiful as the moon and wise as the daughter of Giamschid, had decreed to take into his service the bukshee of her armies, and to invest him, as one worthy of all confidence, with the keeping of his beloved capital of Bangalore.'

The voice of the crier had scarce ceased, when it was answered by one as loud, which sounded from the crowd of bystanders, ' Cursed is he who maketh the robber Leik his treasurer, or trusteth the lives of Moslemah to the command of an apostate ! '

With unutterable satisfaction, yet with trembling doubt and anxiety, Hartley traced the speech to the elder fakir, the companion of Barak. Tipú seemed not to notice the interruption, which passed for that of some mad devotee to whom the Moslem princes permit great freedoms. The durbar, therefore, recovered from their surprise; and, in answer to the proclamation, united in the shout of applause which is expected to attend every annunciation of the royal pleasure.

Their acclamation had no sooner ceased than Middlemas arose, bent himself before the musnud, and, in a set speech, declared his unworthiness of such high honour as had now been conferred, and his zeal for the prince's service. Something remained to be added, but his speech faltered, his limbs shook, and his tongue seemed to refuse its office.

The Begum started from her seat, though contrary to etiquette, and said, as if to supply the deficiency in the speech of her officer, 'My slave would say that in acknowledgement of so great an honour conferred on my bukshee, I am so void of means that I can only pray your Highness will deign to accept a lily from Frangistan, to plant within the recesses of the secret garden of thy pleasures. Let my lord's guards carry yonder litter to the zenana.'

A female scream was heard, as, at a signal from Tipú, the guards of his seraglio advanced to receive the closed litter from the attendants of the Begum. The voice of the old fakir was heard louder and sterner than before.—'Cursed is the prince who barters justice for lust! He shall die in the gate by the sword of the stranger.'

'This is too insolent!' said Tipú. 'Drag forward that fakir, and cut his robe into tatters on his back with your chabouks.'[1]

But a scene ensued like that in the hall of Seyd. All who attempted to obey the command of the incensed despot fell back from the fakir, as they would from the Angel of Death. He flung his cap and fictitious beard on the ground, and the incensed countenance of Tipú was subdued in an instant, when he encountered the stern and awful eye of his father. A sign dismissed him from the throne, which Haidar himself ascended, while the officious menials hastily disrobed him of

[1] Long whips.

his tattered cloak, and flung on him a robe of regal splendour, and placed on his head a jewelled turban. The durbar rang with acclamations to Haidar Alí Khan Bohauder, 'the good, the wise, the discoverer of hidden things, who cometh into the divan like the sun bursting from the clouds.'

The Nawab at length signed for silence, and was promptly obeyed. He looked majestically around him, and at length bent his look upon Tipú, whose downcast eyes, as he stood before the throne with his arms folded on his bosom, were strongly contrasted with the haughty air of authority which he had worn but a moment before. 'Thou hast been willing,' said the Nawab, 'to barter the safety of thy capital for the possession of a white slave. But the beauty of a fair woman caused Solomon ben David to stumble in his path; how much more, then, should the son of Haidar Naig remain firm under temptation! That men may see clearly, we must remove the light which dazzles them. Yonder Feringi woman must be placed at my disposal.'

'To hear is to obey,' replied Tipú, while the deep gloom on his brow showed what his forced submission cost his proud and passionate spirit. In the hearts of the courtiers present reigned the most eager curiosity to see the *dénouement* of the scene, but not a trace of that wish was suffered to manifest itself on features accustomed to conceal all internal sensations. The feelings of the Begum were hidden under her veil; while, in spite of a bold attempt to conceal his alarm, the perspiration stood in large drops on the brow of Richard Middlemas. The next words of the Nawab sounded like music in the ear of Hartley.

'Carry the Feringi woman to the tent of the Sirdar Belash Cassim [the chief to whom Hartley had been committed]. Let her be tended in all honour, and let him prepare to escort her, with the vakeel and the hakim Hartley, to the Payeen-Ghaut [the country beneath the passes], answering for their safety with his head.' The litter was on its road to the Sirdar's tents ere the Nawab had done speaking. 'For thee, Tipú,' continued Haidar, 'I am not come hither to deprive thee of authority, or to disgrace thee before the durbar. Such things as thou hast promised to this Feringi, proceed to make them good. The sun calleth not back

the splendour which he lends to the moon ; and the father obscures not the dignity which he has conferred on the son. What thou hast promised, that do thou proceed to make good.'

The ceremony of investiture was therefore recommenced, by which the Prince Tipú conferred on Middlemas the important government of the city of Bangalore, probably with the internal resolution that since he was himself deprived of the fair European, he would take an early opportunity to remove the new killedar from his charge ; while Middlemas accepted it with the throbbing hope that he might yet outwit both father and son. The deed of investiture was read aloud—the robe of honour was put upon the newly created killedar, and a hundred voices, while they blessed the prudent choice of Tipú, wished the governor good fortune and victory over his enemies.

A horse was led forward, as the prince's gift. It was a fine steed of the Cuttyawar breed, high-crested with broad hind-quarters ; he was of a white colour, but had the extremity of his tail and mane stained red. His saddle was red velvet, the bridle and crupper studded with gilded knobs. Two attendants on lesser horses led this prancing animal, one holding the lance, and the other the long spear of their patron. The horse was shown to the applauding courtiers, and withdrawn in order to be led in state through the streets, while the new killedar should follow on the elephant, another present usual on such an occasion, which was next made to advance that the world might admire the munificence of the prince.

The huge animal approached the platform, shaking his large wrinkled head, which he raised and sank as if impatient, and curling upwards his trunk from time to time as if to show the gulf of his tongueless mouth. Gracefully retiring with the deepest obeisance, the killedar, well pleased the audience was finished, stood by the neck of the elephant, expecting the conductor of the animal would make him kneel down that he might ascend the gilded howdah, which awaited his occupancy.

'Hold, Feringi,' said Haidar. 'Thou hast received all that was promised thee by the bounty of Tipú. Accept now what is the fruit of the justice of Haidar.'

As he spoke, he signed with his finger, and the driver of the elephant instantly conveyed to the animal the pleasure of the Nawab. Curling his long trunk around the neck of the ill-fated European, the monster suddenly threw the wretch prostrate before him, and stamping his huge shapeless foot upon his breast, put an end at once to his life and to his crimes. The cry which the victim uttered was mimicked by the roar of the monster, and a sound like an hysterical laugh mingling with a scream which rang from under the veil of the Begum. The elephant once more raised his trunk aloft and gaped fearfully.

The courtiers preserved a profound silence; but Tipú, upon whose muslin robe a part of the victim's blood had spirted, held it up to the Nawab, exclaiming in a sorrowful yet resentful tone,—'Father—father—was it thus my promise should have been kept?'

'Know, foolish boy,' said Haidar Alí, 'that the carrion which lies there was in a plot to deliver Bangalore to the Feringis and the Mahrattas. This Begum [she started when she heard herself named] has given us warning of the plot, and has so merited her pardon for having originally concurred in it—whether altogether out of love to us we will not too curiously inquire. Hence with that lump of bloody clay, and let the hakim Hartley and the English vakeel come before me.'

They were brought forward, while some of the attendants flung sand upon the bloody traces, and others removed the crushed corpse.

'Hakim,' said Haidar, 'thou shalt return with the Feringi woman, and with gold to compensate her injuries, wherein the Begum, as is fitting, shall contribute a share. Do thou say to thy nation, Haidar Alí acts justly.' The Nawab then inclined himself graciously to Hartley, and then turning to the vakeel, who appeared much discomposed, 'You have brought to me,' he said, 'words of peace, while your masters meditated a treacherous war. It is not upon such as you that my vengeance ought to alight. But tell the Kafr [or infidel] Paupiah and his unworthy master, that Haidar Alí sees too clearly to suffer to be lost by treason the advantages he has gained by war. Hitherto I have been in the Carnatic as a mild prince—in future I

will be a destroying tempest! Hitherto I have made inroads as a compassionate and merciful conqueror—hereafter I will be the messenger whom Allah sends to the kingdoms which he visits in judgement!'

It is well known how dreadfully the Nawab kept this promise, and how he and his son afterwards sank before the discipline and bravery of the Europeans. The scene of just punishment which he so faithfully exhibited might be owing to his policy, his internal sense of right, and to the ostentation of displaying it before an Englishman of sense and intelligence, or to all of these motives mingled together—but in what proportions it is not for us to distinguish.

Hartley reached the coast in safety with his precious charge, rescued from a dreadful fate when she was almost beyond hope. But the nerves and constitution of Menie Gray had received a shock from which she long suffered severely, and never entirely recovered. The principal ladies of the settlement, moved by the singular tale of her distress, received her with the utmost kindness, and exercised towards her the most attentive and affectionate hospitality. The Nawab, faithful to his promise, remitted to her a sum of no less than ten thousand gold mohurs, extorted, as was surmised, almost entirely from the hoards of the Begum Mootee Mahul, or Montreville. Of the fate of that adventuress nothing was known for certainty; but her forts and government were taken into Haidar's custody, and report said that, her power being abolished and her consequence lost, she died by poison, either taken by herself or administered by some other person.

It might be thought a natural conclusion of the history of Menie Gray that she should have married Hartley, to whom she stood much indebted for his heroic interference in her behalf. But her feelings were too much and too painfully agitated, her health too much shattered, to permit her to entertain thoughts of a matrimonial connexion, even with the acquaintance of her youth and the champion of her freedom. Time might have removed these obstacles, but not two years after their adventures in Mysore, the gallant and disinterested Hartley fell a victim to his professional courage, in withstanding the progress of a

contagious distemper, which he at length caught, and under which he sank. He left a considerable part of the moderate fortune which he had acquired to Menie Gray, who, of course, did not want many advantageous offers of a matrimonial character. But she respected the memory of Hartley too much to subdue in behalf of another the reasons which induced her to refuse the hand which he had so well deserved —nay, it may be thought, had so fairly won.

She returned to Britain—what seldom occurs—unmarried though wealthy; and, settling in her native village, appeared to find her only pleasure in acts of benevolence which seemed to exceed the extent of her fortune, had not her very retired life been taken into consideration. Two or three persons with whom she was intimate, could trace in her character that generous and disinterested simplicity and affection, which were the groundwork of her character. To the world at large her habits seemed those of the ancient Roman matron, which is recorded on her tomb in these four words,

DOMUM MANSIT—LANAM FECIT.

MR. CROFTANGRY'S CONCLUSION

If you tell a good jest,
And please all the rest,
  Comes Dingley, and asks you, 'What was it?'
And before she can know,
Away she will go
  To seek an old rag in the closet.

DEAN SWIFT.

WHILE I was inditing the goodly matter which my readers have just perused, I might be said to go through a course of breaking-in to stand criticism, like a shooting-pony to stand fire. By some of those venial breaches of confidence, which always take place on the like occasions, my private flirtations with the Muse of Fiction became a matter whispered in Miss Fairscribe's circle, some ornaments of which were, I suppose, highly interested in the progress of the affair, while others 'really thought Mr. Chrystal Croftangry might have had more wit at his time of day.' Then came the sly intimation, the oblique remark, all that sugar-lipped raillery which is fitted for the situation of a man about to do a foolish thing, whether it be to publish or to marry, and that accompanied with the discreet nods and winks of such friends as are in the secret, and the obliging eagerness of others to know all about it.

At length the affair became so far public, that I was induced to face a tea-party with my manuscript in my pocket, looking as simple and modest as any gentleman of a certain age need to do upon such an occasion. When tea had been carried round, handkerchiefs and smelling bottles prepared, I had the honour of reading *The Surgeon's Daughter* for the entertainment of the evening. It went off excellently; my friend Mr. Fairscribe, who had been seduced from his desk to join the literary circle, only fell

asleep twice, and readily recovered his attention by help of his snuff-box. The ladies were politely attentive, and when the cat, or the dog, or a next neighbour, tempted an individual to relax, Katie Fairscribe was on the alert, like an active whipper-in, with look, touch, or whisper, to recall them to a sense of what was going on. Whether Miss Katie was thus active merely to enforce the literary discipline of her coterie, or whether she was really interested by the beauties of the piece and desirous to enforce them on others, I will not venture to ask, in case I should end in liking the girl—and she is really a pretty one—better than wisdom would warrant, either for my sake or hers.

I must own, my story here and there flagged a good deal; perhaps there were faults in my reading, for while I should have been attending to nothing but how to give the words effect as they existed, I was feeling the chilling consciousness that they might have been, and ought to have been, a great deal better. However, we kindled up at last when we got to the East Indies, although on the mention of tigers, an old lady, whose tongue had been impatient for an hour, broke in with, 'I wonder if Mr. Croftangry ever heard the story of Tiger Tullideph?' and had nearly inserted the whole narrative as an episode in my tale. She was, however, brought to reason, and the subsequent mention of shawls, diamonds, turbans, and cummerbunds, had their usual effect in awakening the imaginations of the fair auditors. At the extinction of the faithless lover in a way so horribly new, I had, as indeed I expected, the good fortune to excite that expression of painful interest which is produced by drawing in the breath through the compressed lips; nay, one miss of fourteen actually screamed.

At length my task was ended, and the fair circle rained odours upon me, as they pelt beaux at the Carnival with sugar-plums, and drench them with scented spices. There was 'Beautiful,' and 'Sweetly interesting,' and 'O Mr. Croftangry,' and 'How much obliged,' and 'What a delightful evening,' and 'O Miss Katie, how could you keep such a secret so long?' While the dear souls were thus smothering me with rose-leaves, the merciless old lady carried them all off by a disquisition upon shawls, which she had the impudence to say, arose entirely out of my story.

Miss Katie endeavoured to stop the flow of her eloquence in vain ; she threw all other topics out of the field, and from the genuine Indian, she made a digression to the imitation shawls now made at Paisley, out of real Thibet wool, not to be known from the actual Country shawl except by some inimitable cross-stitch in the border. 'It is well,' said the old lady, wrapping herself up in a rich Cashmere, 'that there is some way of knowing a thing that cost fifty guineas from an acticle that is sold for five ; but I venture to say there are not one out of ten thousand that would understand the difference.'

The politeness of some of the fair ladies would now have brought back the conversation to the forgotten subject of our meeting. 'How could you, Mr. Croftangry, collect all these hard words about India ?—you were never there ?' —'No, madam, I have not had that advantage ; but, like the imitative operatives of Paisley, I have composed my shawl by incorporating into the woof a little Thibet wool, which my excellent friend and neighbour, Colonel Mackerris, one of the best fellows who ever trode a Highland moor or dived into an Indian jungle, had the goodness to supply me with.'

My rehearsal, however, though not absolutely and altogether to my taste, has prepared me in some measure for the less tempered and guarded sentence of the world. So a man must learn to encounter a foil before he confronts a sword ; and to take up my original simile, a horse must be accustomed to a *feu de joie*, before you can ride him against a volley of balls. Well, Corporal Nym's philosophy is not the worst that has been preached, 'Things must be as they may.' If my lucubrations give pleasure, I may again require the attention of the courteous reader ; if not, here end the

CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE

GLOSSARY

Abraham, shamming, shamming sickness.
abune, above.
aigrette, tuft of feathers.
ain, own.
alcade, a Spanish magistrate.
Alla Akber, God is great.
amende honorable, proper and ample apology.
an non, &c. (p. 77), are you not Richard Middlemas, from the town of Middlemas? Answer in Latin.
apostate, one who has abandoned his religious faith.
appurtenance, appendage, accessory.
argosy, large merchant-vessel, esp. of Ragusa and Venice.
auld, old.

bairn, child.
baith, both.
banka, courtier.
baron-bailie, a minor magistrate.
basilisk, a fabulous creature whose look alone was supposed to cause death.
bastion, projecting part of fortification.
baulder, bolder.
bazaar, the market of an Oriental city.
beaux yeux de ma casette, beauties (beautiful eyes) of my purse.
begum, Hindu queen or lady of high rank.
belive, betimes.
Benoni, the son of my sorrow (Gen. xxxv. 18).
blate, civil, bashful.
blink, glance.
bonnie, fine, pretty.
bonnie hand, fine thing.
bon-vivant, lover of good living.
booze, drink.
bordure, border.
Bramin, member of Hindu highest, or priestly, caste.
browst, brewing.
brusten, burst.
bukshee, general.

cadgy, frolicsome.
canny, careful, lucky.
caravanserai, Oriental inn.
carline, old woman, hag.
cela n'est pas honnête, it is not proper.
chabootra, platform.
chabouk, long whip.
chield, fellow.
chobdars, usher, mace-bearer.
chowry, flap made of a cow's tail.
chuckie-stanes, small pebbles; five stones—a child's game.
chyle, white milky fluid produced by the process of digestion.
claver, chatter.
cleek to, catch up.
clocking-hen, clucking or hatching hen.
cockerel, young cock.
commissaries, officers charged with supply of food.
coss, Indian measure of distance.
coterie, circle, set.

coup de soleil, sunstroke.
cowrie, shell of small animal found in Indian ocean; used as money, six or seven thousand being worth a rupee.
credence, introduction.
creeze, dagger with wavy blade.
crimp, to kidnap, one who kidnaps, men to serve in the Army and Navy.
crore, the sum of ten million rupees, worth one million pounds.
cull in the ken, man or boy in the house.
cummerband, sash.
curry, dish of meat cooked with spices and ginger.
Cuttyawar, a famous breed of horses.

daffing, folly, joking.
dénouement, conclusion, final development.
depone, swear.
depôt, head-quarters of regiment.
dewan, treasurer.
dinna, do not.
dirk, stab.
doctus utriusque juris, learned in both laws (civil and ecclesiastical law).
domum mansit—lanam fecit, she stayed at home—she spun wool.
dour, hard, stubborn.
dowrah, official guide of a Hindu village.
dubash, steward.
durbar, public levée of Indian prince.
dye, toy.

ee, een, eyes.
ex officio, in virtue of one's office.

fakir, religious mendicant, devotee.
fanfaronade, vain boasting, swaggering.
fause-face, mask.
Feringi, European.
feu-de-joie, discharge of firearms, salute.
Florentine, pie.
flyting, badgering, scolding.
foot, find the length of her, find out her weaknesses, manage her.
Frangistan, Europe.
fyke, trouble, worry.

gait, way.
gallooned, embroidered with a narrow, close-woven braid for binding dresses.
Ghauts, mountain ranges on either side of Hyder Ali's kingdom of Mysore.
girning and gabbling, grinning and chattering.
glass-breakers, deep drinkers.
gled, kite.
good-daughter, daughter-in-law.
gowffing, playing golf.
guerdon, reward, payment.
guide, treat ill, use ill.
guinea-pigs, company directors, as recipients of guinea fees.
gules, red.

haggis, heart, &c., of sheep boiled with suet, oatmeal, &c.
hank, hold, coil.
hie, high.
higgler, small pedlar.
Hindostan, India.
hogg, shilling.
hookah, smoking-pipe with long flexible tube, smoke being drawn through water in vase to which tube and bowl are attached.
houri, lovely maiden in the Mohammedan paradise.
howdah, canopied and enclosed seat upon elephant's back.
hye-spye, a children's game, kind of hide and seek.

ilk, of that, of the same, as 'Middlemas of that Ilk' = Middlemas of Middlemas.
indenture, sealed agreement.
Inner-House, a division of the Scotch law-courts.

insignia, signs, distinguishing marks.

jalousing, thinking, opining.
jouk and let the jaw gae by, duck and let the wave go by.

kaffila, caravan of merchants.
kafr, unbeliever.
kail, cabbage, dinner.
kail-yard, cabbage-plot.
ken, know.
khan, caravanserai, inn.
khelaut, dress of honour.
killedar, governor or commandant of a fort.

lac, the sum of one hundred thousand rupees, worth £10,000.
lampoon, virulent or scurrilous piece of satire.
landlouper, stroller.
lazar-house, hospital.
leddy, lady.
listed, liked.
lithotomical, for cutting for stone in bladder.
lobscouse, hash of meat and vegetables; stewed biscuit and salt meat.
loon, fellow.
lootie, marauder, plunderer.
luckie, dame, title given to old women.
lucubrations, literary work, esp. of pedantic or elaborate character.

Mahrattas, states on the west side of India.
mair, more.
mais c'est égal, but it's all the same.
mango, Indian tree bearing fleshy fruit with turpentine flavour, eaten ripe or used green for pickles.
matchlock, gun with lock in which match is placed for the purpose of igniting powder.
minaret, slender turret connected with mosque.
mohur, gold coin of British India worth fifteen rupees.
Monsieur, the gentleman, sir.
Mootee Mahul, pearl of the palace —a term of endearment.
mort-skins, skin of a lamb or sheep that has died accidentally.
Moslemah, Mohammedans.
motakul, meeting.
moullah, Mohammedan learned in theology and the sacred law.
muezzin, crier of a mosque who announces the hours of prayer from the highest stage of the tower.
muir, moor.
mulled, made into a hot drink with sugar, spices, yolk of egg, &c.
mulligatawny, highly seasoned soup.
musnud, state cushion.
mutchkin, measure equal to an English pint.

nabob, provincial governor or commander of an army in India; rich man who has made his fortune there.
naggra, state drum.
nautch, spectacle by professional dancers.
nawaub, native governor or nobleman.
Nizam, title of the ruler of Hyderabad.
no, not.
Nourjehan, light of the world, a term of endearment.
nouz, for 'nous', intelligence, enterprise.
Novum Castrum, Newcastle.
nullah, water-course, ravine.
nuzzar, tribute of gold mohurs.

or, gold.
ordinary, eating-house.
ottar, otto or attar, fragrant essential oil distilled from rose-petals.
ouzel, kind of small bird.
ower, too.

pagoda, gold coin once current in Southern India; Hindu temple.
palanquin, covered litter for one, carried usually by four or six men.
pallet-beds, straw beds, mattresses.
par excellence, above all others.
parterre, level space in garden occupied by flower beds.
partizan officer, officer of a regiment armed with partizans, or halberds.
patois, dialect.
Paxarete, kind of sherry from the south of Spain.
pendant, parallel, complement.
peon, native Indian foot-soldier.
pettah, town or suburb outside a fortified place.
picaresca, what is adventurous and not over-honest.
pickaninnies, little children.
Pindarees, mercenary soldiers.
pint, the Scotch pint was equal to three imperial pints.
postern, side gate.
pragmatical, dogmatic.
predilection, preference, partiality.
prescription, limitation of time within which a claim for debt can be raised.
pro tanto, for so much.
protégé, one who is under the protection, or advanced by the interest, of another.
pro tempore, for the time being.
protocol, official formula.
puling, whining.

quantum sufficit, sufficient quantity.
quean, woman, wench.
quos ego, whom I—the speech of Neptune is here broken off in the midst of a threat of punishment.

rajpoot, noble or aristocrat of India.
rampant, heraldic phrase for animal standing on hind-legs with fore-paws in air.
rationale, fundamental reason.
rencontre, meeting.
rokelay, a short cloak worn by women.
rupee, silver coin of India, nominally worth two shillings.

Sahib Angrezie, English gentleman.
salam, low bow of head and body with right palm on forehead.
Salam Alaikum, peace be with you.
Salam Alaikum bema sebartem, peace abide with you for that ye have endured patiently.
sang froid, coolness, self-possession.
sasines, legal document which testifies that a person has been put in lawful possession of certain property.
screeds, pieces torn off, shreds.
scunner, gie a, make a gesture of disgust or loathing.
signalled, described, noted.
sipahee, native Indian foot-soldier.
sirdars, chieftains, officers.
skirls, screams.
small-sword, rapier or sword for thrusting only.
souple, active, supple.
sowar, native cavalry-man in Indian armies.
sowarree, grand procession.
spleen, ill-temper, spite.
strata, layers.
strathspey, Scotch dance resembling reel, but slower.
subpoenaed, commanded by writ to attend a court of justice.
sum ille miserrimus, I am that most wretched man.
swivel, small cannon fixed on a swivel.

tamarind, Indian tree, the pulp of whose fruit is used to make cooling drinks.
tantivy, fit of violence.
Tartarian, prepared by Tartars or in the lands which they inhabit.
tatoo, small horse of Southern India.

telinga, native soldier in the East India Company's service.
thane, noble, important man of a district.
thirlage, used in regard to the mortgaging of property and rent.
threeps, obstinately insists.
tope, knoll or slight eminence.
townfit, the foot or end of the town.
toy, head-dress worn by women of the lower classes.
trepan, trap, ensnare.

vakeel, government messenger.
vapouring, swaggering.
velis et remis, with oars out and all sails spread.
vidette, horseman in advance of an outpost.

weans, children.

yin, one.

zenana, that part of the house of high caste Indian families in which the women are secluded.